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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME
Forty-second session (resumed)

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 471st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 26 June 1992, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. de RIEDMATTEN (Switzerland)

CONTENTS

Approval of the decision by the Sub-Committee of the Whole on Administrative and Financial Matters relating to the revised target for the 1992 General Programmes, namely US\$ 386,443,200.

Approval of the recent decision of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on Administrative and Financial Matters relating to the reclassification of four D-1 category posts as D-2.

Approval of the recent decision of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on Administrative and Financial Matters relating to attendance by delegations from the following observer Governments at meetings of the Sub-Committees of the Whole on International Protection and on Administrative and Financial Matters and at informal meetings of the Executive Committee in 1992: Ghana and Rwanda.

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

This record is subject to correction.

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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The discussion covered in the summary record began at 11.20 a.m.

APPROVAL OF THE DECISION BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS RELATING TO THE REVISED TARGET FOR THE 1992 GENERAL PROGRAMMES, NAMELY US\$ 386,443,200 (A/AC.96/1992/CRP.1)

The draft decision appearing in document A/AC.96/1992/CRP.1 was adopted without a vote.

APPROVAL OF THE RECENT DECISION OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS RELATING TO THE RECLASSIFICATION OF FOUR D-1 CATEGORY POSTS AS D-2 (A/AC.96/1992/CRP.2)

The draft decision appearing in document A/AC.96/1992/CRP.2 was adopted without a vote.

APPROVAL OF THE RECENT DECISION OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS RELATING TO ATTENDANCE BY DELEGATIONS FROM THE FOLLOWING OBSERVER GOVERNMENTS AT MEETINGS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE WHOLE ON INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS AND AT INFORMAL MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IN 1992: GHANA AND RWANDA (A/AC.96/1992/CRP.3)

The draft decision appearing in document A/AC.96/1992/CRP.3 was adopted without a vote.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.25 a.m.

**A/AC.96
/SR.
472**



General Assembly

Distr.
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A/AC.96/SR.472
16 November 1992

ENGLISH
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 472nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 5 October 1992, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. de RIEDMATTEN (Switzerland)
Chairman: Mr. LANUS (Argentina)

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Opening of the session

Election of officers

Statement by the Chairman

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

General debate

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of the Executive Committee will be consolidated in a single corrigendum to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

1. THE TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN, speaking as outgoing Chairman of the forty-second session, declared open the forty-third session of the Executive Committee. The events of the last 12 months seemed to have been more sharply contrasted than those of previous years. Developments on the more hopeful side, such as the many repatriation operations now under way, the repeated displays of solidarity on the part of the international community and the exemplary spirit of selflessness shown by those involved, could be contrasted with more sombre developments, such as the disquieting political destabilization in certain regions of the world, the increasing number of persons forced to flee their country under often tragic circumstances, and the systematic denial of certain fundamental human rights. UNHCR was now being confronted on a daily basis by considerable challenges which severely tested not only its reaction capacity and that of its staff, but also its basic principles and its international credibility.
2. In that connection, UNHCR's fortieth anniversary, which had been celebrated a few months earlier in the presence of several former High Commissioners, should be a source of encouragement and inspiration. The High Commissioners had recalled an institution which had consistently adopted a pragmatic approach by adapting its structures and methods to new political climates and to specific new problems. In each different period, the political will to succeed had made it possible to overcome obstacles that had seemed to be nearly insurmountable.
3. Today's challenges took many forms: migratory flows on an unprecedented scale, complex rescue operations involving both governmental and non-governmental agencies, mobilization of resources in a period of budgetary restrictions and the need to adapt international institutions and their governing mechanisms to a profoundly altered environment. However, if it continued to be inspired by the same political will as in the past, UNHCR would be capable of adjusting its mechanisms and its resources to meet the needs of the present.
4. He had also derived encouragement from the visit he had made, with the support of the Swiss Government, to Cambodia, Thailand and Bangladesh. That mission had helped him realize, first, that the tragic lot of those forced to flee their homes must always be central to UNHCR's concerns. UNHCR had to be untiring in its efforts to seek satisfactory solutions to the agonizing question of their future. Secondly, there was a need to recognize the full extent of the burden borne by countries of asylum; it was clear that more equitable burden sharing was essential. Thirdly, with the overlapping between the local population and refugees that was a feature of certain situations, it was understandable that social tensions and economic distortions could arise; UNHCR had to take them into account. Fourthly, the management of a camp or a repatriation operation was a sophisticated exercise which involved many governmental and non-governmental partners and called for great patience, goodwill, skill and initiative. Fifthly, the staff of UNHCR and of the many

other bodies working in the field under difficult conditions had shown a sense of responsibility and a spirit of self-sacrifice which were wholly admirable. The attacks made recently in some of the media were unjustified.

5. After thanking all those who had assisted him in his task, he concluded by quoting Geneva's motto "Post tenebras lux" and said he was convinced that the more hopeful aspects of the situation he had referred to would prevail over the more sombre ones.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (agenda item 2)

6. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to nominate candidates for the office of Chairman.

7. Mr. MANENT (France) nominated Mr. Lanus (Argentina).

8. Mr. GAMA (Brazil) and Mr. FAN Guoxiang (China) seconded the nomination.

9. Mr. Lanus (Argentina) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

10. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to nominate candidates for the office of Vice-Chairman.

11. Mr. LANG (Austria) nominated Mr. Boddens-Hosang (Netherlands).

12. Mr. BURUSAPATANA (Thailand) and Mr. MWABULAMBO (United Republic of Tanzania) seconded the nomination.

13. Mr. Boddens-Hosang (Netherlands) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

14. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to nominate candidates for the office of Rapporteur.

15. Mr. BENHIMA (Morocco) nominated Mr. Gubartalla (Sudan).

16. Mr. SAFAEE (Iran) seconded the nomination.

17. Mr. Gubartalla (Sudan) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

18. Mr. Lanus (Argentina) took the Chair.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

19. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had been founded in Geneva in 1951, it had been thought that three years would be enough to solve the problem of a small group of persons who had been displaced as a result of the Second World War. More than 40 years later, however, the problem was still unsolved. UNHCR now had increasing responsibilities and a role which went beyond assistance and protection.

20. Referring to the scope of the refugee problem, he reminded the Executive Committee that the situation in the 1950s had arisen as a consequence of the Second World War and that many European refugees had then been taken in by Latin American countries. The first UNHCR regional office had been set up in Bogota. In the 1960s, Africa had been the scene of population displacements, particularly in Rwanda, Zaire, Angola and Ethiopia, as a result of conflicts connected with the process of decolonization. The focus had shifted to Asia in the 1970s, when the boat people had appeared and the most massive exodus of the twentieth century had started because the war in Bangladesh had created 10 million displaced persons. During that decade, the military Governments of the Southern Cone of Latin America had caused large numbers of persons to flee their homes and many had found refuge in Europe. The 1980s had seen the displacement of 5 million Afghans to Pakistan and Iran, as well as displacements in Central America, a region then ravaged by civil wars, repression and violence. In the early 1990s, while problems in Asia, Africa and Latin America persisted, Europe was again experiencing population displacements. The refugee problem thus no longer characterized a single region, but affected the entire planet.

21. In addition, refugees, who had numbered 1 million at the beginning of the 1950s had today reached a figure of over 17 million, even without counting those currently being created by the crisis in the Balkan peninsula. By its very size, that problem called for far more than a policy of humanitarian assistance: it required a political solution, since international peace and security were at stake.

22. With regard to the nature of the phenomenon underlying UNHCR's protection mission, he said that the reasons for population displacements in recent years had gone beyond the framework of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. In addition to fears of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality or opinion, there were fears created by armed conflicts, economic and social distress and chronic natural disasters. Suddenly, the traditional concept of "refugee" was no longer adequate to encompass the problem posed by the displacement of millions of human beings. That was why the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection had undertaken to examine, and was still studying, a whole set of conceptual problems relating to the legal status of refugees, as well as such questions as the situation of persons failing to meet the requirements defined by the 1951 Convention, the criterion governing the cessation of refugee status and the definition of "safe haven". Those questions gave rise to varying reactions, since every region, if not every country, tended to view solutions in terms of its history, its culture and its geographical location.

23. The conceptual and practical problems which were involved in protection and were not always covered by the existing rules had already been discussed at length, but it was as yet too early to think about amending the protection regime established under the existing conventions. What could most usefully be done at the present stage was to consider what guidelines could be given to the High Commissioner in order to facilitate her humanitarian task. The fundamental objective of protection was to find lasting humanitarian solutions, which would be in conformity with the basic principles of asylum and, most importantly, of non-refoulement. It meant, on the one hand, day-by-day protection of individuals or groups which had left their country

and whose fundamental rights were no longer guaranteed and, on the other, the consolidation and updating of the legal regime governing the status and rights of refugees.

24. Latin America, for its part, had been supporting the refugee cause for over a century: the Treaty of Montevideo, which had been the first to include the legal concept of political asylum, had been signed in 1889. The 1928 Havana Convention and the 1933 Montevideo Convention, which developed that concept further, had also inspired the 1951 United Nations Convention. The effectiveness of asylum as a means of dealing with dramatic situations had once again been recognized by the Plan of Action agreed on by the 1989 International Conference on Central American Refugees, which had had considerable success in alleviating the problems of refugees in the region concerned.

25. The challenges which UNHCR had to face were on a scale commensurate with the distress and despair suffered by refugee mothers and children and by entire refugee families. In the belief that life was worth more than law, UNHCR had had the courage to carry out its programme of humanitarian activities even when, as was so often the case, they went beyond the bounds prescribed by legislation. More than any other United Nations agency, UNHCR had thus taken a moral stand which had won it the trust of the international community and had enabled it to act in very difficult situations with prudence and without political bias - whether in intervening with Governments or participating in voluntary repatriation programmes - to bring assistance to human beings pushed to the limit of distress by being forced to flee their homes for fear of physical violence and persecution. The moral dimension of the activities of the Office which Mrs. Ogata headed so effectively also put it in a good position to meet the demands that the international community would continue to make of it as new difficulties and complex new situations arose.

26. Such situations were inevitable, since history was not predictable: from UNHCR's establishment until the beginning of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, wars had killed 20 million persons, 12 million of whom had fallen victim to civil wars in developing countries. Moreover, history seemed to have reached a turning point and the face of the world, along with the concepts and ideas it carried with it, would now have to change.

27. Through its work, UNHCR was helping to create a climate of trust and solidarity, a vital prerequisite for international peace and security. In the new international context, it should therefore link its humanitarian assistance and protection tasks more closely with efforts to improve coexistence between States within the international system of which they were a part. In carrying out the functions of Chairman of the Executive Committee, he pledged to cooperate fully with all delegations in furthering those objectives.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (item 3 of the provisional agenda) (A/AC.96/XLIII/L.1)

28. The provisional agenda (A/AC.96/XLIII/L.1) was adopted.

29. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Executive Committee should consider at a later stage, under item 7, all applications from governmental delegations for observer status at informal meetings of the Committee and at meetings of its Sub-Committees, in accordance with the decision taken at its thirty-ninth session (A/43/12/Add.1, para. 35).

30. It was so decided.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4)

31. Mrs. OGATA (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) welcomed all those present at the current session of the Executive Committee. She was particularly pleased to welcome the delegations of Hungary and Ethiopia, which were participating as members in the Committee's annual session for the first time. She thanked the outgoing Chairman for the advice he had given UNHCR in the course of a year which had put it severely to the test in every area. She was sure that she could count on the new Bureau for the necessary support in confronting the challenges of the months ahead.

32. The past year had been a turbulent one: no fewer than 3 million people had been forced to flee in search of safety, while another 1.5 million refugees had returned home voluntarily. The situation had been particularly tragic in Africa. Over 1 million Somalis, fleeing famine, chaos and internal conflicts, had sought asylum in Djibouti, in Ethiopia, in Kenya and in the Yemen. Although the signing of a general peace agreement on Mozambique was to be welcomed, the fact remained that the exodus to Malawi and Zimbabwe had gathered momentum as a result of the drought - only one fifth of urgently needed food supplies had actually reached the inhabitants of that devastated region. In West Africa, some 800,000 refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone still had no solution to their problem in sight. The media did not always give the same publicity to all refugee situations and UNHCR was striving to redress the balance through its public information strategy.

33. Certain regions of Asia were also experiencing crises. She was continuing to collaborate closely with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to overcome the difficulties created by the return to Myanmar of 265,000 refugees who had fled to neighbouring Bangladesh and to ensure an international presence in Myanmar. It had been necessary to strengthen UNHCR's presence in Nepal and to take a series of emergency response measures to deal with an influx of asylum seekers from Bhutan. In South-East Asia, in contrast, voluntary repatriations to Viet Nam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia had continued at a steady pace - so far, over 30,000 Vietnamese had returned home. However, the situation of refugees remaining in first asylum countries was still far from being resolved.

34. In Central America, continued progress had been made towards durable solutions as a result of the International Conference on Central American Refugees. The reintegration of returnees was about to enter the realm of development phase and UNDP would shortly be taking over the process. The Peace Accord concluded in El Salvador had consolidated the reconciliation process. The launching of the first phase of the Plan of Action for Repatriation to Guatemala and the establishment of a UNHCR presence in the

major target zones were significant steps towards the solution of the remaining refugee problem in that part of the world. In Haiti, however, the deteriorating economic situation, the absence of political solutions and the harshness of sanctions had combined to keep alive the risk of a major exodus. In that connection, it was important for Governments in the region to maintain an open humanitarian policy.

35. In the Middle East, there was reason to fear that the deteriorating situation in northern Iraq, the difficulties involved in the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Government and the onset of winter might lead to new outflows of Kurdish refugees. To prevent such an eventuality, there was an urgent need to build up stocks for the winter and to review cross-border operations.

36. In Europe, over 2.6 million persons had been displaced or were under siege as a result of the conflict now raging in the former Yugoslavia. UNHCR had launched a comprehensive humanitarian operation to aid the victims, which had been broadly endorsed by the international ministerial meeting convened on 29 July 1992. That crisis had reminded the world that no region was safe from the refugee problem and had given fresh impetus to the debate on the concepts underlying protection of refugees and displaced persons and prevention of refugee flows.

37. It was not yet possible to assess the consequences of the brutal changes which had taken place on the international scene and which, in some cases, had led to the break-up of the State and, in others, to the breakdown of Government authority. The dynamics of displacement had evolved and become more complex, while the ethnic factor was today a common denominator in many refugee problems. As humanitarian action increasingly became part of a wider process for restoring peace in a changing world, the last 12 months had given a new dimension to UNHCR's role and confronted it with new kinds of difficulties.

38. As to activities undertaken in 1992, lessons learned and what still remained to be done, she stressed that her goal was to strengthen UNHCR's response capacity and emergency preparedness and to cooperate more closely with other agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations. Measures had been taken to establish emergency response teams, to diversify emergency training and to stockpile basic relief supplies. Standby agreements had been concluded with a number of non-governmental organizations for the secondment of staff. The skills of the United Nations Volunteers had been called upon on a number of occasions. Those new arrangements had played a key role in UNHCR's ability to respond to recent crises.

39. However, the effectiveness of UNHCR's action in emergencies was also determined by the prevailing security situation. Humanitarian crises were increasingly tending to arise in the midst of armed conflict and UNHCR was having to provide protection and assistance to the displaced in conditions of insecurity and anarchy. In that connection, she paid tribute to all those who were working in the field, at great personal risk, to keep the relief pipeline open and, above all, to the staff of UNHCR, the United Nations, non-governmental and other organizations who had lost their lives in the defence of that cause. The meeting on security matters held at the request of

UNHCR at the level of the United Nations system had resulted in a number of concrete recommendations, which had already begun to be implemented. In the face of emergencies on an unprecedented scale, UNHCR had had to turn on occasion to the armed forces for logistical support - in the post-cold war era, there was everything to be gained by channelling the enormous capacity of the military to serve humanitarian purposes.

40. Emergency response should be coupled with energetic political initiatives to promote the safe and voluntary return of refugees. Although the fact that 1.5 million refugees had been repatriated in 1992 was to be welcomed, it should be recognized that refugee movements had become more and more difficult to control and that, as a result, returns had become more complex and precarious.

41. In Mozambique, Liberia and South Africa, drought, food shortages, conflicts and political confrontations had been a set-back to hopes of rapid repatriation. In addition, although over 60,000 refugees had returned spontaneously to Angola, fragile security and the presence of large numbers of mines continued to slow down progress towards solutions, even though difficulties were gradually being overcome as new funding was received. UNHCR had also made arrangements for the voluntary repatriation of Burundi refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania. It was taking an active part in negotiations and activities under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with a view to finding a solution to the plight of Rwandese refugees.

42. The situation in Afghanistan clearly illustrated the difficulties posed by repatriation today. Over 1 million Afghans who had fled to Pakistan and to the Islamic Republic of Iran had returned to their country in 1992, but the explosive situation and the climate of insecurity prevailing in Afghanistan were seriously hampering the funding and implementation of reintegration and rehabilitation measures. The Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Eliasson, had been warned that, unless all agencies and donors were vigorously and urgently mobilized, there was a risk that a further humanitarian catastrophe might occur with the onset of winter.

43. Repatriation was a difficult undertaking, often more complex politically and operationally than emergency response. Although planning and preparation played an important part, the key element was still innovation and flexibility, as had been shown by UNHCR's operations in Cambodia. Within the framework of the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements, some 130,000 Cambodians had returned to date, mainly from Thailand. Barring a major setback, UNHCR expected all Cambodian refugees in Thailand to have been repatriated by early 1993, in time to take part in the elections. In order to meet that deadline, however, it had had to modify assistance options to take account of the lack of available, mine-free land for allocation to returnees. Despite the difficulties, the sustained political will of the international community should make it possible to secure the long-term future of such returnees.

44. In south-eastern Ethiopia, a new initiative had been launched which abandoned traditional distinctions between refugees, returnees and the affected population. UNHCR had worked in association with other United Nations and non-governmental organizations to assess and meet the

needs of the entire community and thus stabilize the population, with a view to breaking the vicious circle of exile, return and internal displacement, followed by renewed exile to an area of chronic under-development, drought and instability.

45. Those repatriation operations underlined the importance of quick-impact development projects to bridge the gap between relief and longer-term development. In association with UNDP and other agencies, UNHCR had made significant progress in that area, within the framework of the International Conference on Central American Refugees. The lessons learned in that part of the world were now being applied in Cambodia.

46. However, much remained to be done and the respective roles and responsibilities of the agencies at various stages of the relief-to-development continuum needed to be clarified and dovetailed. Indeed, that was an area where an improvement in inter-agency coordination was urgently needed and the extent to which the international community was able to meet the development challenge would affect UNHCR's ability to maintain the impetus in repatriation and to find genuine and lasting solutions to refugee problems.

47. The other lasting solution provided by resettlement, in cases where the lives or fundamental well-being of refugees depended on it, should also not be overlooked. With the proliferation of refugee crises around the world, the need for resettlement places had grown and UNHCR was counting on the generosity of the international community, especially on behalf of detainees being released in the former Yugoslavia.

48. After enhancing emergency response and promoting solutions leading to repatriation, prevention was the third cornerstone of UNHCR's strategy. Given the close links between serious human rights violations and refugee flows, it had sought to reinforce contacts with human rights bodies within the United Nations system and was actively participating in preparations for the World Conference on Human Rights. Together with other organizations and with the help of some Governments, it had stepped up its training and advisory activities as a part of efforts to establish institutions in eastern Europe and in the CIS countries to pre-empt and manage the problems of massive displacements.

49. UNHCR had undertaken increasingly effective initiatives to provide protection and assistance to displaced populations within countries of origin, notably in the former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka and the Horn of Africa. Experience in the former Yugoslavia had shown that an international presence was an essential element of prevention. While it was difficult to quantify its effects with any accuracy and while it did not always succeed in preventing forced displacements, it nevertheless enabled the international community to see to it that populations were given humanitarian treatment and it could have restraining effects.

50. Like solutions, prevention should be applied with imagination and flexibility to each situation encountered. Thus, in the context of the Somali crisis, UNHCR's prevention activities had taken the form of supplying food, tools and essential commodities from Kenya, where UNHCR was based, so

that people were not compelled to cross borders in search of humanitarian assistance. UNHCR was coordinating that aid as part of a comprehensive United Nations plan to accelerate relief operations in that war-torn country.

51. Such cross-border operations had considerable implications in terms of resources and, in order to be effective, required the full and entire cooperation of the agencies, the acquiescence of the parties concerned and the wholehearted commitment of the international community. Assistance to internally displaced persons, as in Yugoslavia, could be successful only to the extent that their safety could be assured and an early solution found; it was thus entirely dependent on the political will of the parties concerned. Although prevention was a promising strategy, it also had its limits. It could not be a substitute for asylum, but was rather a supplement to it.

52. International protection had always been the basis of UNHCR's three-pronged strategy. The focus of protection had always been to meet refugees' needs from the time of flight until the achievement of a durable solution. However, the sheer scale and complexity of contemporary population displacements had placed serious strains on that orthodox approach to refugee protection, had weakened international solidarity and had sometimes seriously jeopardized the principle of asylum. Whatever the part of the world concerned, the question had arisen as to how heavy a burden countries of asylum could legitimately tolerate: as a result, it was vital that international protection should be given a coherent yet flexible framework which safeguarded fundamental principles and premises, while at the same time taking into account current realities and enabling UNHCR to play a creative role, not only in addressing the problems of refugees, but also in solving the refugee problem.

53. It was with that objective in mind that she had set up an internal working group, chaired by the Director of International Protection, to recommend a strategy for strengthening international protection in the 1990s. The conclusions of that working group had been submitted to the Executive Committee in the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/799). She hoped that the Committee would endorse the new thrust which underlay many of the Office's current activities.

54. The Note did not seek to redefine UNHCR's mandate or to extend its competence to new groups of persons. Rather, it reflected realities and affirmed UNHCR's willingness to play a clearly defined role in the prevention and solution of refugee problems. There was also no question of substituting protection in the country of origin for traditional humanitarian action on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers. The institution of asylum had to be preserved and efforts continued to establish efficient and fair procedure which would ensure that valid claims to refugee status were recognized. At the same time, UNHCR should show sufficient flexibility to develop concerted and comprehensive regional arrangements which could successfully solve specific problems of displacement in different regions of the world.

55. A regional arrangement which combined a commitment to provide protection for those who needed it, clear policies for immigration and development assistance and a coherent information strategy could help to solve the problem of mixed movements of refugees and migrants in Europe. She hoped that the

rationalization of UNHCR's priorities, structures and resources in Europe would help to strengthen its ability to engage Governments and other actors in a constructive dialogue with a view to adopting a regional approach.

56. It was evident that the magnitude of the challenges exceeded the capacity of UNHCR alone. Whether prevention, protection or solutions were involved the execution of coherent and comprehensive strategies meant that new impetus had to be given to the existing partnership between UNHCR and Governments, other United Nations agencies and international, regional and non-governmental organizations. Indeed, the Office had rarely enjoyed such close cooperation or received such strong encouragement from Governments. She was deeply grateful to them for their support, whether diplomatic, political, financial or human. There were close operational links between UNHCR and its sister agencies, particularly WFP and UNICEF, as well as with IOM. The Office's collaboration with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs continued to be fruitful and its relations with ICRC were gaining in depth day by day with its repeated interventions in areas of conflict. Lastly, she wished to pay tribute to the many non-governmental organizations which had given ample proof of their commitment and which were the spearhead of many aspects of refugee operations, often under the most difficult of conditions.

57. The many different actors on the scene made the question of coordination even more crucial. Coordination, however, was not a panacea. It required considerable investment in terms of time and energy and could not in any circumstances be a substitute for the individual or collective capacity of agencies. The objective of coordination should be to enhance comparative advantages. Furthermore, in the case of complex humanitarian actions, coordination could best be ensured on the basis of the principle of assigning one agency the lead role, such as that assumed by UNHCR in refugee or refugee-like situations as in northern Iraq and now in former Yugoslavia. Public opinion was also among UNHCR's concerns in that regard, especially at a time when racism and xenophobia were on the increase in some parts of the world. UNHCR had therefore stepped up its public information campaign in order to build greater support for the humanitarian values and traditions in whose name it had been created. She urged all political leaders and opinion-makers to join UNHCR in stemming the tide of intolerance against refugees and asylum seekers.

58. Lastly, she referred to the problem of UNHCR's resources. Unlike other agencies of the United Nations system, UNHCR could hardly be selective in assuming its responsibilities. It could not avoid them when a new crisis occurred and when the international community urged it to take action. What it could and should do was constantly to look for ways of better managing and utilizing its resources. One year of unprecedented need had been followed by yet another. Out of US\$ 1.1 billion - the estimated total of its needs - UNHCR had received US\$ 751.9 million as at 29 September 1992. She was grateful to those who had made those contributions, particularly as the donor base had widened. However, she felt bound to appeal to "traditional" donors not to reduce their contributions at a time when needs were constantly increasing. Furthermore, she planned to undertake a number of personal initiatives later in the year to diversify sources of governmental funding. Encouraged by the significant increase in private funding, she was continuing her approaches in that area.

59. As operational challenges become more complex, UNHCR needed continuously to reassess both its approach to programmes and its management and monitoring systems. Its capacity and the capacity of its operational partners for needs assessment and programme design had to be markedly improved, so that the effectiveness of programmes could be measured against clear objectives. In the course of the coming year, she intended to take steps to enhance UNHCR's programming skills. Efforts to strengthen the Office's financial accountability should be matched by increased effectiveness in programme delivery.

60. Such measures should also help UNHCR respond better to the needs of the majority of refugees or, in other words, women and children. Training activities now under way were designed to provide staff with the necessary tools to incorporate the guidelines on refugee women into programme design and implementation. Thanks to the generosity of the Norwegian Government, UNHCR would from now on have the benefit of the services of a Coordinator for Refugee Children. She hoped that the Office would be able to develop educational opportunities for such children with a view to enabling them to overcome the trauma of exile and to face the future bravely once they returned home.

61. Better programming should also go hand in hand with a more ecological approach. At the Rio Summit, UNHCR had fully supported the Declaration on Environment and Development and it had to help ensure that any environmental damage caused in and around refugee camps was kept to a minimum and cooperate in repairing such damage. UNHCR had explained its policy on the subject in a conference room paper and hoped that the necessary funding would be made available to enable it to appoint a coordinator on environmental issues.

62. Management of funds and programmes was indissolubly linked to the question of human resources. The huge number of emergencies that UNHCR had had to deal with over the past two years had placed a heavy burden on the shoulders of its staff, who had proved equal to the challenge. However, if the Office was to maintain the same standards of competence and commitment, it would need to manage its human resources more carefully and creatively. Its staff, who were being constantly called on to respond to emergencies or to cope with priority tasks, were moving from one operation to another or else were being hurriedly recruited in a way which satisfied neither their own career aspirations nor the needs of sound management. As a result, there was need for a coherent policy which took account of UNHCR's current role and responsibilities. She intended personally to undertake a qualitative review of UNHCR's staffing requirements and to devise a human resources strategy which would enable the Office to respond efficiently to the challenges of the post-cold war era. In addition, a dynamic and rational policy had been adopted to redress the gender imbalance within UNHCR.

63. The six points of prevention, preparedness, protection, solutions, partnership and resources represented in a nutshell the tremendous challenges with which UNHCR was confronted. In conclusion, she recalled that her predecessor, Mr. Stoltenberg, had told the Committee that he hoped that the issue of population movements would be placed on the international political agenda. Today it was on that agenda and it was through political initiatives that the root causes of displacement could be addressed. It was also through

political agreement that durable solutions could be found for refugee problems. Humanitarian action could pave the way for political action, but could never be a substitute for it.

64. As humanitarian action became linked with peacemaking and peace-keeping efforts, UNHCR's task was to see to it that the question of refugees and displacement remained on the political agenda, while at the same time preserving its non-political and humanitarian approach. The task of political bodies was to support humanitarian action, while resisting the temptation to use humanitarian avenues to overcome political obstacles. Nor should political action jeopardize the speed, efficiency and neutrality of humanitarian aid. Political bodies and humanitarian agencies needed to work hand in hand.

65. The unexpected ending of the cold war had led many to hope that the fruits of a warmer political climate could be reaped immediately, but time had shown those hopes to be unfounded. UNHCR should remain wary of the dangers, lest they engulf it, and should be prepared to seize opportunities, lest they escape it. Despite the inherent contradictions of the era which was now beginning, it was with an acute sense of responsibility and a feeling of intense satisfaction that UNHCR was continuing its work. It was aware of the vital importance of humanitarian action in the post-cold war period and it also knew that it was serving a noble cause and was proud of the fact that a large number of voluntary returns had been recorded over the past 12 months. UNHCR was operating at the extreme limits of its capacity, but, thanks to the extraordinary support of the international community and of the Executive Committee, it was ready and willing to continue with its humanitarian task.

66. Mrs. LAFONTANT-MANKARIOUS (United States of America) said that, shortly after the Executive Committee's adoption, at its forty-second session, of the High Commissioner's plan for responding to emergency situations, a spate of emergencies had begun which had strained the reserves of all humanitarian agencies beyond their operational limits. UNHCR's actions in the former Yugoslavia, the Horn of Africa and northern Iraq had subjected it to criticism by the public, which judged it according to the speed and effectiveness of its operations, whereas in fact it was obliged to coordinate its activities with those of a wide range of United Nations agencies, private institutions and donors.

67. While commending UNHCR for its handling of the refugee situation in Myanmar, she urged the Government of that country to accept the presence of UNHCR monitors, so that refugees who had already indicated a willingness to return to their countries would be able to do so. At the same time, the Government of Bangladesh should maintain an open door to asylum seekers and work with UNHCR on voluntary repatriation efforts. The United States, which had contributed generously to UNHCR's programme in Bangladesh, appealed to other donors not to forget the many refugees who did not make newspaper headlines. In Bhutan, over 100,000 persons of Bhutanese origin had fled to India and then to western Nepal to seek refuge. Thanks to its new emergency response mechanism, UNHCR had responded with speed and efficiency and had saved many lives.

68. On the subject of international protection, UNHCR had clearly demonstrated, by its comprehensive response to the humanitarian crisis in the Republics of the former Yugoslavia and in northern Iraq, the need to combine emergency response with protection activities. It was likely that the international community would continue to request the Office to intervene in situations where refugees, internally displaced persons and affected civilian populations were intermingled. Similarly, the United States welcomed the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/799), which was an important contribution to the international debate on refugee protection. At the same time, the Executive Committee should recognize that constraints of personnel, of financing and perhaps of mandate might prevent UNHCR from taking on all the additional responsibilities considered in the document.

69. The United States welcomed UNHCR's use in 1992 of general programme funds for voluntary repatriation activities, particularly in Angola. In Afghanistan and Cambodia, it had capitalized on political will to achieve significant success in 1992. The United States was proud to have contributed nearly US\$ 31 million to those three important repatriation programmes.

70. It was imperative that UNHCR's general programme budget proposals should be consistent with the guidelines approved by the Executive Committee. If that were to be achieved, general programmes should be stepped up and priorities reoriented, while UNHCR's programme capacity should be strengthened. With the emergencies now building up in the Horn of Africa and in southern Africa, an increase in the general programme budget would probably be needed.

71. The protection of women and children was not yet of significant concern to many UNHCR field officers, despite the policies and guidelines laid down by the Executive Committee and its Sub-Committees on the subject. The number of women who were still victims of rape was the best example of the failure of traditional protection measures. The time had come to guarantee the physical protection of refugee women by ensuring that there were female field officers present in every emergency situation. Similarly, UNHCR programmes should be more closely linked to the needs of the vast majority of refugees, namely, women and children, and care should be taken to prevent programming mistakes. If necessary, her Government would be willing to assist in funding that effort by an increase in the general programme budget.

72. At the June meeting of the Executive Committee, the High Commissioner had proposed that emergency humanitarian operations should be carried out in partnership with other agencies. She herself fully supported the coordination of UNHCR's activities with those of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Eliasson. She further welcomed UNHCR's collaboration with UNDP in Central America and hoped that returning Angolans would benefit from the Special Relief Programme in Angola.

73. Mr. MORLAND (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that, in 1992, UNHCR had had to take on a particularly heavy workload, especially in Europe and Africa, in addition to the many critical situations it was already having to face all over the world. In Europe, in the former Yugoslav Republics, more than 2.5 million people had been forced to leave their homes as a result of conflicts and deliberate

persecution in the name of "ethnic cleansing", a practice unreservedly condemned by the Community and its member States. He welcomed the appointment of UNHCR as the lead agency in that humanitarian crisis and also paid tribute to the role of UNPROFOR in delivering humanitarian aid under difficult circumstances. The Community and its member States, which had made substantial cash and food contributions, had also participated in the airlift to Sarajevo, provided logistical support and helped UNHCR and local authorities prepare winter shelter. However, he remained convinced that the best way of helping the majority of victims was by delivering relief to their homes or at least as near as possible to their place of origin.

74. Africa, with almost one third of the world's total number of refugees, was facing problems on an unprecedented scale. Clearly, the tragic events that were occurring in the Horn of Africa were beyond the scope of any one agency. In addition to the active role played by ICRC, he therefore welcomed the coordination of the activities of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations working under the umbrella of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The Community and its member States had already responded swiftly and generously to United Nations humanitarian programmes in Africa, a continent which was also suffering from a disastrous drought, and they would continue to do so.

75. Despite those and other emergencies to which it had had to respond, UNHCR had nevertheless been able to record some progress in its voluntary repatriation programmes. Thus, in Cambodia, some 140,000 people had returned home from Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia under UNHCR auspices. In addition, at the beginning of the year, some 1.8 million Iraqi refugees who had fled to Iran and Turkey had returned home voluntarily. Thanks to UNHCR's winterization programmes and to the efforts of a number of non-governmental organizations, the people of northern Iraq had begun to rebuild 1,700 villages which had been destroyed. With the ending of the emergency phase, other United Nations agencies had taken over from UNHCR, but, since that time, the Government of Iraq had continually obstructed the United Nations in its attempts to deliver humanitarian assistance. In the south of the country too, the United Nations presence had been severely restricted. The Community and its member States condemned such actions, which could only perpetuate the suffering already inflicted on the population by its own Government. It was in Afghanistan, as a result of the political changes that had taken place the previous April, that the largest number of voluntary repatriations had been achieved. Unfortunately, the hostilities that had recently broken out in Kabul had resulted in further population displacements.

76. If the High Commissioner's hope of a decade of voluntary repatriation was to be fulfilled, UNHCR would need to have the capacity to respond quickly to changes in the political climate. In December 1991, the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters had decided to include US\$ 18 million in the 1992 general programmes target for voluntary repatriation and had agreed that that provision should be maintained in future years. In the belief that voluntary repatriation should be at the heart of UNHCR's programmes, the Community and its member States strongly supported that change. However, UNHCR aid, which was limited in time, could not in itself guarantee the future of returnees. The Community and its member States therefore welcomed the

establishment of the Inter-Agency Working Group on the Reintegration of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, which had held its first meeting in January.

77. In addition, the Community and its member States greatly valued the dialogue which was already under way between UNHCR, Governments, member States and the Commission of the European Communities. The regular meetings of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters had been particularly useful in drawing the attention of Governments to many important issues concerning the running of UNHCR, including income and expenditure, staffing and key programme activities such as voluntary repatriation.

78. In addition, over the past year, the Sub-Committee on International Protection had for the first time held a regular series of meetings. Given the complexity of today's refugee situations and the expansion of UNHCR's activities, protection should form an integral part of the Office's activities. It would therefore be useful if, at future meetings, the Sub-Committee could consider protection issues in the context of UNHCR's actual programmes, with contributions, as appropriate, from the Office's geographical divisions, as well as from its jurists. In that context, he welcomed the Note on International Protection prepared by the Working Group on International Protection. The Community and its member States were ready to play their full part in discussing and developing the important ideas it contained, such as UNHCR's role in the country of origin, group determination and safety zones.

79. The number of asylum seekers had continued to rise in western Europe, reaching an estimated 545,000 by the end of 1991. More than 3 million persons had claimed asylum in Europe since 1984, creating social strains which had become openly apparent in some countries in 1992. Without repudiating the obligations they had contracted under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the Community and its member States could not ignore the huge increase in the number of manifestly unfounded requests for asylum or the fact that a very large proportion of applicants had become displaced illegally within the European Community without taking up opportunities for protection available to them closer to home. Such abuses diverted staff and other resources from more productive activities, undermined the natural sympathy felt for refugees and jeopardized the interests of the small minority in genuine need of protection. The member States of the European Community fully endorsed the Working Group's conclusion that asylum was an essential option. However, the right to seek and to enjoy asylum did not entail the right to travel to a particular country in order to apply for it. A more effective distinction had to be made between genuine protection needs and the migration preferences expressed by individuals. In that regard, he reminded the Executive Committee that the refoulement of rejected applicants was a matter for the discretion of individual States, in accordance with national immigration laws.

80. UNHCR's budget, which was already well in excess of US\$ 1 billion in 1992, was a reflection of the enormous demands placed upon it. In the course of the financial year that had just elapsed, the Community and its member States had together contributed nearly 40 per cent of UNHCR's total budget. In 1992, it had still been the Office's principal donor and had also

provided increased logistic and practical support. In that connection, he urged all Governments to give financial or other support to UNHCR's activities or to increase the contribution they were already making.

81. The unprecedented scale and complexity of humanitarian situations raised fundamental questions about UNHCR's capacity to respond effectively and about the role of the Executive Committee in guiding UNHCR's work. With the decline in the proportion of the budget devoted to general programmes, which represented UNHCR's core expenditure, the way in which the annual budget had traditionally been considered was now open to question. The size and nature of UNHCR's staff and its relationship with Governments, other United Nations agencies and its implementing partners in the field needed to be reviewed in the light of the new problems and opportunities facing UNHCR. Those issues should be examined thoroughly both in the Executive Committee and in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters. In that regard, the Community and its member States fully supported UNHCR's efforts to define priorities and to redeploy its activities in Europe.

82. In conclusion, he paid tribute to the memory of UNHCR staff members who had met a tragic death in the service of the humanitarian cause.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.



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HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 473rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 5 October 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. LANUS (Argentina)

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General debate (continued)

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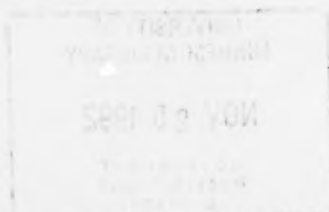
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GE.92-02848 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (A/AC.96/798, A/AC.96/799) (continued)

1. Mr. DUBOIS (Canada) said that, over the years, UNHCR had demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. While focusing on its primary task of providing protection for refugees, it had been called upon to play an important role in addressing the human problems pertaining to all displaced persons. Its care and maintenance programmes, which now reached millions of individuals, were additional to its ongoing search for durable solutions for large refugee populations throughout the world.
2. Referring to the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in December 1991, he said that, in his Government's view, all efforts of the United Nations family in the humanitarian field should henceforth be organized under the new Department's leadership.
3. A measure of the importance of UNHCR's position among the agencies most concerned with the provision of relief and humanitarian assistance was resource allocation, which, in Canada, as in other countries, was linked to institutional performance. The \$33 million so far provided by his country towards UNHCR activities in 1992 amounted to 50 per cent more than Canada's contribution to UNHCR two years previously. Canadians had been profoundly affected by the events in many parts of the world as a result of which vast numbers of people had left or were leaving their countries. There was therefore great pressure for Canadian humanitarian assistance to be conveyed quickly and effectively through organizations which had demonstrated that they could efficiently reach the recipients most in need. Increased danger to field workers, aid fatigue and the limits on the international donor community's finite pool of resources were a threat to his country's responsive capacity. A broader donor base was essential. Referring in that connection to the question of refugee women and children, a topic of central importance to both UNHCR and Canada, he stressed the usefulness of the UNHCR Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Women (EC/SCP/74) and the motivating role of the High Commissioner in that regard. The place that women and children should occupy in the implementation of UNHCR's mandate would not be fully recognized, however, until UNHCR as an organization ensured that the needs of those groups became central to all its programming.
4. UNHCR had responded with dedication and often by innovative methods to the additional pressures created by the need to combine the provision of humanitarian assistance with diplomatic efforts to reduce the threat to refugee populations and with support for peace-keeping operations. UNHCR staff were to be commended for their determination in the cause they served. Yet, with massive operations under way in Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, there might be a danger of UNHCR becoming overstretched. Could it be asked to take the lead in each successive, or indeed concurrent, humanitarian crisis? Both UNHCR and its member States had to adapt to a changing world. The members of the Executive Committee, in particular, should endeavour to give UNHCR clear and realistic policy guidance. They should also ask themselves whether the Executive Committee as constituted was the best vehicle to achieve that purpose in the present troubled times.



5. In that connection, he noted that the strengthening of United Nations machinery for emergency relief was one of the objectives of the movement for the reform of the United Nations. Positioning UNHCR for the challenges ahead, determining its strategic objectives and devising policy priorities together with other United Nations organizations and, in particular, with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be matters of top priority on the Committee's agenda. In that regard, Canada had been impressed by the approach described in the present year's Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/799). In a world increasingly characterized by ethnic nationalism and by the break-up of existing States and the emergence of new ones, UNHCR's ability to respond to new types of protection needs would be essential. The UNHCR of tomorrow should have a well-defined vision of its role, as well as the means required in order to achieve its priorities. It should endeavour to build strategic and complementary alliances with others who shared its objectives; it should rely not only on its own capacity, but also on that of its implementing partners and it should be able to monitor closely the efficiency and effectiveness of its programmes. To that end, it should continue to develop sound in-house monitoring and assessment policies and to provide its staff with the necessary training opportunities. Demonstrated performance would be the key and reliable indicators would have to be available so that lessons could be learned from successes and failures. His delegation had listened with interest to the comments made in that connection by the High Commissioner in her opening statement.

6. Canada was keenly aware of the uncertainties which beset humanitarian relief operations, as well as of the management difficulties resulting from unpredictable funding levels. The Canadian International Development Agency had recently offered the services of an independent consultant to undertake a strategic-management review of UNHCR. It was hoped that the exercise, in which UNHCR had fully collaborated, would provide a useful impetus for reflection in such areas as financial and personnel management.

7. Turning to the events of the past year, which had surely set a regrettable record for crises of a hitherto unknown gravity, he paid tribute to United Nations and non-governmental organization personnel who had risked their lives in delivering humanitarian relief and to members of the United Nations peace-keeping forces who had supported those efforts. The casualties had included a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, Sergeant Malcolm Ralph; the world owed a special debt of gratitude to him and to the other fallen peace-keepers. Canadians had been horrified by the tragedy attending the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and found the practice of so-called "ethnic cleansing" entirely unacceptable and repugnant in the extreme. His Government had been deeply gratified by the dedication shown by the High Commissioner and felt confident that she would play a key role in the follow-up to the process that had begun at the London International Conference on Former Yugoslavia. Canada was fully participating in the United Nations system's efforts in the former Yugoslavia. Its humanitarian assistance now totalled more than \$25 million; the Canadian peace-keeping contingent would soon number 2,400 and Canada was actively involved in the resumption of the airlift operation to Sarajevo which had recently been interrupted for security reasons. Furthermore, in response to the High Commissioner's appeal for the protection of former

Yugoslavs displaced by the fighting, Canada had announced special immigration measures for some of the persons affected.

8. Turning to the situation in Somalia, he said that Canada took heart from UNHCR's determination to bring relief to the suffering people of that country and particularly noted the innovations being implemented, such as the cross-border operation out of Kenya to forestall population outflows. As part of its contribution to international efforts to bring humanitarian relief to the Somali people, Canada had to date provided more than \$20 million and Canadian Forces aircraft were participating in relief flights into the country's interior. A Canadian contingent of 750 peace-keepers would soon be present in Somalia. Canada was also participating in efforts to provide protection for refugee Somalis. Although resettlement outside the region could not be a solution for the more than 1 million displaced Somalis, his Government was endeavouring to accelerate family unification for Somalis who had close relatives in Canada and was working with UNHCR on the provision of resettlement opportunities in Canada for individual Somalis who could not benefit from other solutions. Canada would take an active part in the international meeting on humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia scheduled to take place in Geneva the following week.

9. The broad public support enjoyed by his Government's efforts to assist in bringing relief and protection to refugees in many parts of the world could be maintained only if Canadians remained convinced that policies and programmes for refugees were firmly based on real needs and that resources were being used effectively and efficiently. The time had come to recognize that the worldwide movement of persons who had been displaced for varying reasons, or who had chosen to move, was such that comprehensive approaches had to be developed. It was not possible to build legal walls around the recipient countries, however overburdened they might already be. On the other hand, mass exodus could not be allowed to become a solution for countries wishing to get rid of their minorities. As a traditional country of immigration, Canada considered it essential to ensure that the admission of migrants rested on a sound legal basis and that strategies to help them adapt to their new countries were in place, while complementary strategies were developed to promote tolerance and understanding in receiving societies. The Canadian Parliament was now considering important new immigration legislation which would, *inter alia*, provide effective management of an immigration programme now covering 250,000 immigrants and refugees each year. The new law would also ensure that negative decisions had real and timely consequences, including removal of persons whose claims were rejected, but were applied within a system which offered fair procedural safeguards for all claimants.

10. In conclusion, he reiterated Canada's support for the positive evolution of UNHCR policies. The collective challenges facing the international community were not likely to diminish in the near future. They must continue to be approached with the clear-sightedness which had become characteristic of UNHCR under the leadership of the present High Commissioner.

11. Ms. FRIGGEBØ (Sweden) said that the High Commissioner and her staff were to be commended for the great efforts they had made in the past year. UNHCR's

ability to carry out large and complex operations such as those in the former Yugoslavia was a sign of positive improvements.

12. The refugee problem in the former Yugoslavia, although undoubtedly the greatest refugee problem in Europe since the Second World War, was primarily a European responsibility and should not overshadow the still more difficult refugee situations in other parts of the world, such as Somalia, Mozambique, Liberia and Afghanistan. The regions in question should also be encouraged to shoulder their responsibilities. The vast majority of refugees worldwide were still found in the third world and the major receiving countries included some of the world's least wealthy nations.

13. The Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/799) provided a useful basis for the future development of the overall framework for the Executive Committee's continued work. Her Government attached particular importance to adopting a comprehensive approach with a view to possible preventive action to avoid mass movements of refugees, as well as to the implementation of programmes in the country of origin to facilitate voluntary repatriations. While recognizing the importance of humanitarian diplomacy as an aspect of preventive protection, Sweden considered that special attention should be given to the relationship between human rights and the outbreak of refugee crises. UNHCR had an important role to play in the preparation of the 1993 International Conference on Human Rights.

14. Another matter of great concern to her country was the accession by all States to existing international and regional instruments on refugees and stateless persons. UNHCR's efforts to promote accession were important and deserved support. Emphasizing the especially difficult situation of refugee women and children, she welcomed the first results of the implementation of UNHCR's Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Women (EC/SCP/74), noting, however, that much remained to be done before the Guidelines could be fully implemented. The coordinators for refugee women and children could play an important role in that connection.

15. Endorsing the comments on UNHCR's mandate and competence contained in the Note on International Protection, she drew attention to General Assembly resolution 46/182, which defined the responsibility of the United Nations system as a whole for responding to emergency situations. The task of making the United Nations system more efficient in emergency situations would certainly require cooperation and coordination among all relevant agencies under the leadership of the new Department of Humanitarian Affairs. UNHCR was called upon to play an important role in meeting that challenge. The concept of cross-mandate was particularly interesting in that context and should be applied wherever feasible. Her Government had consistently advocated a clear division of responsibilities between the relevant United Nations and other organizations in order to provide an effective response in complex emergency situations. It was aware of UNHCR's long tradition of cooperation with non-governmental organizations and wished to see other United Nations agencies learning from UNHCR in that field.

16. Sweden, together with some other countries, had always tried to respond to UNHCR's financial needs as far as possible and had steadily increased its contribution over the years. It would certainly remain dedicated to the cause of refugees. However, the need for fair burden-sharing among donors had to be emphasized. To expect only a few countries to carry the major part of the burden was no longer realistic. Donors should provide the High Commissioner with the necessary flexibility in the allocation of funds; earmarked contributions should be avoided as far as possible. In the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, her delegation had proposed an increase in resources within General Programmes. UNHCR had indicated that the Programme Reserve and the Emergency Fund would probably be required for use in Africa in early 1993 and the High Commissioner in her opening statement had highlighted the increasing requirements for voluntary repatriation. Sweden therefore appealed to the members of the Executive Committee to decide on an increase in the Programme Reserve from the proposed 10 per cent to 15 per cent of General Programmes, an increase in the Emergency Fund from \$20,000 to \$30,000 and an increase in the Voluntary Repatriation Fund from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

17. In conclusion, she drew attention to the dangerous revival in Europe of tendencies such as chauvinism, xenophobia, racism and anti-semitism and stressed the importance of developing national and international legal instruments and undertaking information activities to counteract discrimination on ethnic grounds.

18. Mr. KHACHADPAI BURUSAPATANA (Thailand) said that, since the ending of the cold war, changes in the scale and complexity of the world refugee situation had brought new challenges to the international community and UNHCR. Recent outbreaks of large-scale emergencies involving refugees and displaced persons had occurred in almost all regions, from South-West Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa to the very heart of Europe, thus placing further demands on the already strained resources of UNHCR, which must be given, the requisite political and financial support to cope with new refugee situations and speed up the search for durable solutions.

19. In that regard, he had welcomed the fact that, in launching 1992 as the year for voluntary repatriation at the Executive Committee's preceding session, the High Commissioner had stressed that the right to return to one's country must be given as much emphasis as the right to seek asylum abroad. Repatriation was a key to solving refugee problems, particularly when they were characterized by mass flows of asylum-seekers or assumed a migratory character. In the former case, repatriation should take place once the political climate in the country of origin was suitable and, in the latter, once an asylum-seeker had been deemed not to be a refugee. Repatriation of all non-refugees to their countries of origin would not only end the chronic problem of stranded non-refugees, but would relieve first asylum countries of a heavy drain on scarce resources. Countries of origin particularly should promote the return of non-refugees and he commended UNHCR's indispensable and continued monitoring role in that regard. At the same time, conditions in the country of origin must be dealt with; UNHCR and the related United Nations development agencies needed the world community's assistance in improving socio-economic infrastructures in countries of origin so that they might be better able to reabsorb their citizens and avert repeated

outflows. Reintegration assistance was also important and his delegation appreciated the European Community's reintegration assistance programme for Vietnamese returnees, which deserved full international support.

20. With regard to the repatriation of Laotian asylum-seekers from Thailand, all parties to the fifth tripartite meeting had reaffirmed their commitment to implement fully the outline plan, agreed upon at the fourth tripartite meeting, for a phased repatriation and reintegration of Laotians from Thailand to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. That three-year plan stipulated guidelines for the repatriation and reintegration of Laotian refugees from Thailand. Effective implementation would, however, depend primarily on UNHCR's taking care of financial and resource aspects; and, secondly, development assistance programmes should be set up to ensure the smooth reintegration of returnees. Interested non-governmental organizations could play an important supplementary role for that purpose and Thailand was prepared to facilitate any such activities.

21. The Royal Thai Government intended to reduce to one the number of Laotian refugee camps in Thailand; Baan Vinai camp would be closed by the end of 1992 and Chiengkam camp by 1993. He assured all parties concerned that the Thai authorities would cooperate fully with the Laotian authorities to ensure the repatriation programme's success and would not allow any persons or elements to obstruct its implementation.

22. With regard to Vietnamese boat people, his Government remained committed to the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA), adopted in 1989. His delegation thanked all concerned for the resettlement of the pre-cut-off date camp population, numbering some 12,000. An obvious shortcoming of the CPA was, however, in relation to repatriation, the most realistic solution to the possible residual problem of non-refugees. The turnover of voluntary Vietnamese returnees was still low and not commensurate with the number of those deemed non-refugees or screened out. If the discrepancy was allowed to continue, countries such as Thailand would face an endless residual problem of stranded non-refugees. Therefore, UNHCR and all parties concerned should jointly explore alternative means to repatriate all non-refugees according to the procedures provided for in the CPA. His delegation urged UNHCR to convene the CPA Steering Committee in order to review the CPA's implementation and explore ways to accelerate the repatriation of Vietnamese non-refugees. The measures would, of course, include reintegration assistance and other supplementary elements.

23. Since the signature of the Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding in 1991, the repatriation of displaced Cambodians in Thailand had progressed satisfactorily, over 120,000 having returned safely to their homeland. His delegation paid tribute to UNHCR, the United Nations system and all concerned for making that possible and hoped that all Cambodians remaining in camps in Thailand would be repatriated before May 1993 in order to participate in the Cambodian general elections.

24. It was nevertheless imperative for Cambodian refugees to be able to reintegrate into their homeland's economic and social fabric. In that respect, his delegation looked to international support for the necessary reconstruction

and rehabilitation of Cambodia; UNHCR, in collaboration with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), international development agencies and non-governmental organizations, had an essential catalytic role in providing reintegration assistance. Thailand would continue to do its utmost with a view to Cambodia's rehabilitation.

25. A further important point in connection with mass refugee influxes was the environmental side-effect on countries of temporary refuge. Thailand, where over 16,000 acres had been devoted to providing temporary shelter, would have to deal alone, after the departure of refugees and displaced persons, with the task of restoring huge areas of deforested land out of its limited resources. His delegation urged UNHCR and the world community to give the matter serious consideration and had been pleased to learn that the issue of refugees and the environment had been included in the agenda for the Executive Committee's current session.

26. His delegation expressed its profound appreciation to all parties concerned, as well as to UNHCR and its staff, for their untiring efforts to mitigate the predicament of refugees and asylum-seekers. He was confident that, given the dedication and the determination of the High Commissioner and her staff and with the full cooperation of all parties concerned, the current problems would become manageable. Thailand, for its part, would continue its humanitarian tradition and fully support the international community's efforts to that end.

27. Mr. WALKER (Australia) said that the past two years had been particularly eventful in international humanitarian affairs. Lessons had been learned from the international community's quick and cohesive response to the large-scale population displacement arising out of the Gulf conflict: conditions of safety had been created in northern Iraq so that the displaced persons could return to their homes quickly. International mechanisms responding to the situation in the former Yugoslavia had focused on more immediate methods than the traditional approach to crises which engendered mass outflows. Since traditional responses which focused on resettlement might facilitate and even add an element of legitimacy to the horrendous practice known as "ethnic cleansing", other solutions were clearly needed. In that and other recent situations, UNHCR had moved away from its traditional role of protecting refugees pursuant to the 1951 Convention. While that task should remain a core function, circumstances had so changed that UNHCR currently needed facilities to deal with daunting numbers of refugees and other displaced persons.

28. The High Commissioner's strategic plan, outlined in 1991, had aimed firstly at improving UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response mechanism, secondly, at pursuing every opportunity for voluntary repatriation and, thirdly, at promoting solutions through preventive measures at the source. The High Commissioner's three-pronged strategy had, moreover, been adopted at the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, held in July 1992. The Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/799) was also an important contribution to a long-overdue exchange between countries and UNHCR on the issues that affected the High Commissioner's mandate. Two aspects were particularly significant: the concept of protection

and the idea of temporary protection in other countries in circumstances where the problem could not be contained for the time being. Underlining UNHCR's evolving role, the Secretary-General had entrusted UNHCR, in November 1991, with a special mandate to coordinate United Nations humanitarian assistance to displaced persons on the territories of the former Yugoslavia.

29. In addressing the Executive Committee the previous year, the High Commissioner had called 1992 the year of voluntary repatriation; and in some regions the implied promise had been significantly fulfilled. For example, over 130,000 Cambodians had been repatriated from camps along the Thai-Cambodian border and the peace process in Cambodia was well under way. Australia applauded UNHCR's efforts in that process, as well as the flexibility and initiative shown by UNHCR staff under difficult conditions. Elsewhere in South-East Asia, the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees reflected an effective humanitarian response to disorderly population outflows. His delegation, like that of Thailand, looked forward to further concerted international action to resolve that problem.

30. In Afghanistan, too, recent developments had led to a dramatic increase in spontaneous voluntary repatriation. Nevertheless, the international community must go on responding to changing assistance needs particularly for food aid, health, sanitation and mine clearance programmes, as well as attending to the needs of some 2 million registered Afghan refugees still in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

31. Similarly encouraging were events such as those in Central America, where the process begun at the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) had provided a valuable model, linking the problems of refugees and displaced persons to the development of a socio-economic infrastructure able to support voluntary repatriation and integration. Perhaps one of CIREFCA's most important achievements was the degree to which national refugee policies had been subordinated to common international objectives and criteria. The focus of projects in the region had shifted to returnees, who currently outnumbered refugees.

32. In contrast, conditions along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border and in the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia, were dire. Over 266,000 Rohingya refugees were currently in Bangladesh in camps where conditions had deteriorated and the mortality rate had risen significantly. Despite the agreement reached between the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh in April 1992, full-scale repatriation of those refugees was not yet under way; the Myanmar authorities had refused to accept a United Nations monitoring presence in their country. Australia had urged the Government of Myanmar to facilitate the early and safe return of refugees and hoped the authorities would recognize the usefulness of a United Nations presence for that purpose.

33. In the Horn of Africa, what many would describe as the world's most daunting humanitarian crisis threatened an estimated 23 million people with death from famine or disease. The civil war simmering in the Sudan since 1956 and the deteriorating political situation were compounded by the presence of approximately 1 million persons fleeing conflicts in neighbouring countries and

the existence of a large tent city around Khartoum, housing some 2 million internally displaced Sudanese fleeing drought and conflict. Despite the end of the civil war, ethnic strife still plagued Ethiopia and Djibouti had recently faced increased rebel activity. The peace enjoyed by Kenya was also threatened by the effects of drought and the refugee exodus from its neighbours.

34. In Somalia, the situation was extraordinarily complex and was characterized by drought, famine, the disintegration of State authority and the spread of tribal violence, with international relief aid shipments being routinely looted. One million Somalis had crossed the borders into Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen, while hundreds of thousands more were displaced within Somalia, where they lived in circumstances of extreme hardship. No one could be indifferent to the enormous suffering of the Somali people, who were the victims of drought, famine and displacement rather than of persecution. The international community had a responsibility to attempt to put an end to that suffering, which deserved no less attention than the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. His delegation supported the view of the Organization of African Unity's convention on refugees that repatriation in conditions of safety was the most desired outcome, pending which temporary protection and assistance had to be provided.

35. Australia welcomed the recent lead taken by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who had a significant role to play in that situation. The creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the aftermath of the Gulf war, had been an acknowledgment of the need for coordinated institutional arrangements to provide emergency and humanitarian response mechanisms and for high-level political commitment to mobilizing international solidarity and addressing the root causes of the suffering.

36. While the numbers of persons in need of assistance continued to grow, the vast majority of them were not refugees within the terms of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, but displaced persons, whose predicament required qualitatively different solutions. It was clear that the humanitarian crisis facing the world could no longer be seen only in terms of the 1951 Convention and it was necessary to look beyond its provisions. In the past 12 months, the United Nations and UNHCR, in particular, had provided a new vision which recognized that reality. The value of concerted international responses could also not be overstated. The creation of the new position of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs should further enhance the international community's ability to react swiftly and cohesively.

37. The past 12 months had confirmed Australia's view that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was at a crossroad in its history and that it was equal to the challenge of implementing the provisions of the 1951 Convention while rising to the other demands of a changing world. Australia commended UNHCR for its achievements and undertook to continue to assist it by maintaining a strong and responsive resettlement programme and providing financial and material assistance.

38. Mr. FAN Guoxiang (People's Republic of China) said that, despite the varying degrees of progress achieved in the political settlement of crises in

several regions, leading to the voluntary repatriation of refugees in some areas, no improvement could be detected in the ever-worsening refugee situation, which affected 18 million persons. In Asia, the persistent turbulence in some areas prevented large numbers of refugees from returning home, while, in Yugoslavia, Europe faced the most serious refugee problems since the Second World War. On repeated occasions, humanitarian relief for the dire conditions and the lack of food and medicine had been impeded. In Africa, economic backwardness had restricted countries' ability to cope with both natural disasters and conflict and the problem of refugees and displaced persons remained serious, particularly in the Horn of Africa, where 1.5 million persons in Somalia were threatened with death. The solution to that refugee problem and the prevention of new refugee flows had become matters of grave concern and a tremendous challenge to the international community. The early settlement of that problem would not only put an end to the misfortune and sufferings of the refugees, but also lighten and eliminate the economic burden borne by the countries of asylum, thus contributing to regional and global peace and stability in the interests of all countries.

39. The serious nature of the refugee problem indicated that it had become an issue whose solution went far beyond humanitarian assistance and international protection and that it was a matter closely related to the major issues of world peace and development. China had always maintained that it was imperative to combine efforts to provide humanitarian assistance with efforts to eliminate the root causes of the refugee problem, which lay in foreign aggression, armed conflict, poverty, economic stagnation and natural disasters. Efforts were required to combat racial discrimination, prevent ethnic conflict, oppose foreign invasion and uphold the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for State sovereignty. Efforts were also required to establish a just and reasonable new international political and economic order and to help the large number of developing countries in their economic development as the only way of providing a fundamental solution to the refugee problem.

40. It was heartening to note the spirit of strengthened solidarity and burden-sharing that marked the efforts of the international community to provide generous assistance to refugees throughout the world. China had also been making its contribution, within its abilities, and it hoped that the traditional donor countries, especially those with developed economies, would increase the volume of their humanitarian assistance and intensify their efforts to bring about resettlement and find solutions to the refugee problem. It also hoped that the parties to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia would agree, in a spirit of humanitarianism, on an immediate cease-fire and provide all necessary assistance so that humanitarian relief efforts could proceed smoothly. The parties should reach a negotiated settlement to allow the refugees to return home and lead peaceful and normal lives. China supported the international community's efforts to achieve a just, reasonable and peaceful settlement to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

41. The majority of the world's refugees were, however, taking refuge in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, which had to bear the

even their social stability. He urged the international community to continue to pay attention to refugee problems in those parts of the world. The unique role played by UNHCR in providing relief and protection for refugees had been illustrated by the personal visit paid by the High Commissioner to the former Yugoslavia, which had given her a first-hand understanding of the refugee situation there and led to the convening, in Geneva, of the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia.

42. As a State party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, China had always regarded the Convention and its Protocol as the legal basis for the formulation of policies of refugee protection and treatment. China had always provided refugees with protection and assistance and given material and financial support for the work of UNHCR to the best of its abilities. It had so far resettled 280,000 Indo-Chinese refugees, despite its own economic difficulties, and hoped that, after the High Commissioner's recent visit to China, it would continue to receive support and assistance from the international community and UNHCR.

43. Mr. MWABULAMBO (United Republic of Tanzania) said that in her opening statement, the High Commissioner had made a number of key remarks, all of which needed serious consideration if UNHCR was to move in the right direction. With regard to voluntary repatriation, past experience and criticism had convinced his delegation of the need for a standard format and conditions to be followed by States parties in order to dispel uncertainty about who would be responsible for refugees if they returned before formal arrangements had been made and to decide whether asylum countries and UNHCR could be blamed in such circumstances for not having fulfilled their obligations. Another question was that it had to be determined who the major parties to tripartite agreements were and whether refugees' representatives could be parties in addition to countries of origin, countries of asylum and UNHCR. It might also be asked whether the conclusion of a tripartite agreement on repatriation by the three traditional parties after they had satisfied themselves that the conditions that had led to flight no longer obtained could be construed as forced repatriation. Those issues received differing interpretations and even criticism from responsible organs and his delegation would therefore like them to be further discussed so that guidelines or solutions might be found.

44. While there were some regions where expectations that 1992 would be a year of durable solutions were being fulfilled, there were others where that was not the case. The international community should not lose sight of the fact that it might have to deal with other emergencies and he called on the High Commissioner, in conjunction with the major Powers and the international community, to devise measures for the prevention of refugee flows and to try to prevent any adverse situations from developing.

45. Hopes for repatriation had remained high in Rwanda, where his Government was fully involved in peace talks, as well as in Burundi and in Mozambique, where mass repatriation was likely in the not too distant future, following the recent understanding reached by the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO.

However, the situation was worse in Somalia and in the Horn of Africa, but elsewhere on the continent the situation was unpredictable.

46. He commended UNHCR on its able response to the Somali refugees' situation, which was one of the worst in Africa today. UNHCR needed financial backing in order to discharge its responsibilities. Education and vocational training were vital aspects of the solutions that UNHCR was required to provide and they constituted a valuable durable solution. Unlike Europe's most of Africa's refugees had little education: a survey conducted among Mozambican refugees in Tanzania had shown that over 90 per cent were illiterate.

47. His delegation had doubts about the relevance of some of the ideas discussed in the Executive Committee. Although it was difficult to compare average expenditure per refugee in different parts of the world, it was time to try to ensure equity in fund disbursement for refugee care and maintenance on the basis of a standard formula similar to that used to determine refugee status. Otherwise, protection would be jeopardized, particularly in the least developed countries.

48. His delegation was also concerned about the grouping distinction which had led to the appointment of Senior Coordinators for Refugee Women and Refugee Children and which might lead to the grouping of refugees into even more different categories. The issues affecting the various groups were relative and could better be handled by asylum Governments in consultation with country representatives. UNHCR should undertake further studies to determine the overall justification for the appointment of coordinators. In her opening statement, the High Commissioner had expressed her gratitude for the generosity of donors and her recognition of UNHCR's responsibility to manage its funds as effectively as possible. She had recognized that, as operational challenges became more complex, UNHCR needed to measure the effectiveness of its programmes against clear objectives. In his delegation's view, gender issues and societal change would never be practical issues. There could be no doubt as to his delegation's respect for women's rights, but it considered that UNHCR should first perform the role expected of it.

49. The worst refugee situation in Africa's history had occurred at a time when Europe was preoccupied with the 3.5 million refugees and displaced persons in Yugoslavia and when Asia was focusing on Cambodia and Viet Nam. Increasingly apparent xenophobia made Africa's plight even more difficult and, in his delegation's view, the time had come for the High Commissioner, in conjunction with the Organization of African Unity, to convene a world conference on African refugees to draw attention to the origins of the problems faced at points of conflict, particularly since there were signs that the ex-colonial countries were defaulting, even though they owed Africa a great debt.

50. Mr. GRANIC (Croatia) thanked UNHCR and donor countries for the efforts they had made to find solutions to the humanitarian problems faced by his Government in the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. His country was currently providing care for 265,000 displaced persons from Croatia, for some 35,000 refugees from Serbia and for more than 450,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The 4.7 million inhabitants of the Republic of

Croatia had thus given shelter to more than 750,000 displaced persons and refugees - a number which would be the equivalent of 10 million in a country with a population the size of that of Germany. Some 70,000 to 80,000 refugees from Croatia were still in neighbouring countries, mainly in Hungary, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia.

51. As a result of that situation, his Government faced a number of problems. It had no more free accommodation to offer refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina who were continuing to seek asylum in the country and some 70,000 of the latter were currently living in housing inadequate for the approaching winter. Although a considerable volume of humanitarian aid in the form of food, medical supplies and clothes had been received, the cost of caring for such large numbers of displaced persons and refugees still amounted to some \$100 million per month. Croatia had several times appealed to the international community to provide direct financial support, but hitherto almost none had been received.

52. The country was already facing economic difficulties as a result of the high rate of inflation, which had been estimated at more than 30 per cent during the previous month. In addition to the large number of displaced persons and refugees, it had to provide for 700,000 retired persons and 275,000 unemployed, a situation which had led to increasing social tension between the local population and the refugees. Since the Government was unable to give any direct financial support to the families which until now had been accommodating most of the refugees, it was uncertain how long such families would be able to continue to shelter them. A further cause of social tension was that it was impossible for displaced persons to return to their homes in the "pink zones" and United Nations protected areas. Slowness and inefficiency in carrying out the Cyrus Vance Plan, and the high level of destruction in the return areas were additional problems that had to be solved.

53. The constant deterioration in the economic and social situation in Croatia had forced the Government to adopt new measures for solving the ongoing refugee crisis, particularly by tightening control over the borders between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, although without violating basic principles of international humanitarian law. Under those measures, exceptional cases would be considered in cooperation with UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). A few days earlier, 16,000 ex-detainees from Trnopolje in Bosnia and Herzegovina had arrived at a temporary transit centre in Karlovac, organized by UNHCR and ICRC in cooperation with the Croatian Government. Croatia would be providing logistic and humanitarian support for the setting up of refugee camps in safety areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina for new refugees from those countries.

54. His Government was giving high priority to the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes, primarily those from Croatia, 90 per cent of whom were from "pink zones" and United Nations protected areas. From now on, it would be pressing more urgently for increased support and cooperation from UNPROFOR and UNHCR in solving that complex problem. In the first phase, return should be organized to areas where Croats and Hungarians comprised the majority

of the population, namely to all "pink zones" and to United Nations Protected Areas (UNPA). The return should begin in the East and West sectors and continue in the North and South sectors.

55. It was expected that, as a result of the return of Croatia's own displaced persons, additional accommodation would become available for refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina who were currently inadequately housed. With regard to other refugees settled in inadequate accommodation in the country, his Government intended to ask neighbouring countries, through UNHCR, to provide suitable accommodation for the winter season.

56. Croatia was again appealing for direct financial support from the international community to enable it to meet accommodation costs - including, for example, the cost of heating oil - for foreign refugees in the country, as well as financial help for families which had given shelter to such refugees. It would not be approving plans for the building of any new refugee centres in Croatia, but would suggest that other countries should support the building of such centres or else help to rehabilitate existing housing in return areas. Projects already begun would be exceptions to that rule and he again expressed his gratitude to the Governments of Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium in that regard.

57. In conclusion, he drew the attention of the entire international community to the dangerous consequences of inadequate or delayed intervention in attempting to solve the refugee crisis. Due to increasing aggression in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the influx of new refugees might very soon reach a total of 500,000. There was a great danger that increasing numbers of new asylum-seekers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in addition to those already accommodated in Croatia, might spread throughout the whole of Europe.

58. Prince SOBANDLA (Observer for Swaziland) said that Swaziland's refugee problem was one of which the rest of the world might not be aware. His Government thanked the various United Nations agencies, and particularly UNHCR, for their help in solving it.

59. With the launching of the peace process in Mozambique, Swaziland had begun to plan the voluntary repatriation of Mozambican refugees. In a recent survey, most refugees had stated that they wished to return home as soon as possible, although those who had suffered brutal treatment in their country would need counselling before they could decide their future. Swaziland alone could not deal with that problem and would need help from international organizations, especially UNHCR. Repatriation would have to take place in the months preceding the ploughing season and, where possible, families should go straight to their areas of origin without being detained at staging posts in Mozambique. The influx of refugees from that country was continuing, with some 500 to 600 new arrivals each month. He believed that repatriation should be possible provided that there was sound planning and budgeting, particularly to meet transport costs. He looked forward to intensified cooperation with UNHCR in the near future.

60. Although there were few cases of starvation in the refugee camps, food rations were minimal and a recent UNHCR survey had shown that the refugees' nutritional state was poor. The drought had made it impossible to grow supplementary food in the camps and had also meant that there were no opportunities of temporary employment for the refugees.

61. He felt bound to point out that the influx of refugees had included a number of criminal elements, control of which had cost his country dear. Arms and drugs had been brought in and offered for sale and the resources of the police had been stretched to the limit. As a result, public opinion had turned against the refugees, making it difficult for the Government to pursue a policy dictated by concern for their welfare.

62. While his Government, together with UNHCR, had begun to prepare for the voluntary repatriation of Mozambican refugees, the repatriation exercise very much depended on the situation in Mozambique itself. The country needed peace, food and a functioning infrastructure, including educational and health facilities, but it could not provide all of those through its own efforts: help from the international community was needed.

63. Both South African and Mozambican refugees in Swaziland had been affected by the drought. In particular, the cotton harvest had been the worst for many years and the South African refugees would need financial assistance when the rains arrived.

64. In the settlements, refugee women were encouraged to become self-reliant through income-generating projects such as soap-making, knitting, sewing and crocheting. Some were being trained as health motivators and others given instruction in home economics and he appealed to UNHCR for funds to support training workshops. Both refugees camps were some distance from the main towns and the shortage of transport continued to be a problem for the staff of voluntary agencies and for Government workers.

65. Refugee children were being given instruction in English and Portuguese and new subjects had been introduced to prepare them for their eventual repatriation. However, there was a great shortage of accommodation for teachers and, as a result, it was becoming almost impossible to find staff committed enough to come to teach in the settlements. Financial support was also needed for the rehabilitation centre at the Ndzevane settlement so that assistance could be given to disabled refugees and their families.

66. The fact that a refugee problem existed was very much the result of human failure on the part of politicians and statesmen. Swaziland would be able to play its part in helping refugees only if it could rely on the continued guidance and assistance of UNHCR.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.



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HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 474th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 6 October 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. LANUS (Argentina)

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General debate (continued)

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GE.92-02851 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mr. AZIKIWE (Nigeria) said that the members of the Executive Committee should continue to respond to the legitimate wants of needy refugees by adapting to current realities and by accepting their responsibilities, after giving careful thought to how they could adopt new approaches to face new challenges. Naturally, the Committee's agenda should be more forward-looking and reflect the emerging refugee concerns of tomorrow instead of focusing on long debated topics of the past. The Executive Committee must create a constructive atmosphere in which delegations could have confidence that the plight of refugees would be given the very highest priority. There was no easy solution to those problems and only long-term programmes could achieve progress in the context of a multi-pronged approach involving the commitment of all member States.
2. The needs of refugees and displaced persons the world over constituted an enormous challenge which should be met by UNHCR with determination and effectiveness. The countless problems involved should not be seen from a regional perspective, since concerted efforts by the international community as a whole were needed to find durable solutions.
3. The International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, convened on 29 July 1992, had owed its success to the efforts of the High Commissioner and her staff to respond promptly to the needs of displaced persons in the area. Only the activities of the warring factions had occasionally disrupted the delivery of relief assistance, but, with the onset of winter, it was to be hoped that all parties involved would make concerted efforts to facilitate relief operations.
4. Although most delegations at the Executive Committee's forty-second session had expressed the hope that UNHCR would focus in 1992 on the repatriation and resettlement of displaced persons, it was once again faced with a new influx of refugees as a result of the deteriorating situation in some countries, especially the former Yugoslavia. "Traditional recipients", such as Afghanistan, the countries of the Horn of Africa and the Sudan, had suffered as world attention and resources had been diverted elsewhere and, in other regions, such as Latin America, Africa and Asia, there were millions of refugees who had been unable to return home due to the lack of resources and basic infrastructure needed for their reintegration. Durable solutions should be found to eliminate once and for all the unprecedented wave of new refugees.
5. His delegation believed that the fate of refugees the world over was in the hands of the international community and would welcome any initiative on the part of the Executive Committee for the holding of extraordinary meetings, as a demonstration of international solidarity, to consider the tragic situation of refugees in the Horn of Africa and in Afghanistan. The members of the international community could thus be made aware of the problems which were worsening day by day in those regions and which, if not urgently dealt with, might provoke a tragedy. Such meetings would provide an opportunity to formulate a plan of action for a more systematic, collective and long-term approach to the humanitarian challenges that were continually arising. They

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would also make it possible to define more clearly ways of organizing and channelling increased material assistance to asylum countries in the regions concerned and would give donor countries an opportunity to come forward and offer adequate funding. However, the convening of such meetings would depend on positive donor response.

6. The Executive Committee should not overlook those developing countries which had accepted large numbers of refugees or underestimate the enormous efforts they were making to assist them. It hardly needed to be said that refugee-generating countries must put in place policies of participation and honour their obligations by abiding strictly by the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Democratic reforms should give them the political stability they needed to promote prosperity and to pass on to future generations a durable democratic inheritance. In such countries, repression and the use of force must not stifle growing political consciousness or stand in the way of liberalization. Any conflict, whether internal or external, was a setback for peace and arms support for the warring factions was contrary to the principle of the inviolability of national integrity or sovereignty. The international community should impose sanctions on countries which practised such selfish policies that led to conflicts, with the resulting refugee exoduses.

7. His delegation had always deplored the inadequacy of the financial and material resources for UNHCR's field operations, particularly in the Horn of Africa, but welcomed the admirable results that had nevertheless been achieved by the High Commissioner and her young collaborators, who were continuing to assist refugees despite the danger to their lives. The fact remained, however, that UNHCR's structure would need to be reviewed to enable it to meet the challenges of the future. It was disheartening to read criticism in the press of the inadequacies which were hampering UNHCR activities, especially in Africa. Mismanagement, waste and corruption were already taking their toll in terms of time and money, but they became more serious still when they resulted in loss of life and in further sufferings for refugees. There was a need for an uncompromising review of activities which might adversely affect UNHCR's capacity to remedy the plight of refugees. Cases of corruption could not fail to harm the Programme.

8. While commending, as it had always done, the High Commissioner's qualities and her work, his delegation believed that rationalization measures such as those already in place in other United Nations bodies had to be taken if the plight of refugees was not to be compounded by bureaucratic incompetence, evasion of responsibilities and fraud. Regulations had to be enforced to combat such a deplorable lack of ethics. The Executive Committee should also give serious consideration to the establishment of a panel of personalities outside the United Nations system to review the activities of field officers and persons responsible for the disbursement of funds.

9. In conclusion, he emphasized that the solution to current refugee problems did not necessarily mean abandoning present approaches, but, rather, adjusting and fine tuning them for the best possible results. UNHCR should put its house in order by adopting a more credible, flexible and effective means of implementing the programmes it had adopted.

10. Mr. HYNINEN (Finland) said that Finland supported the strategy which had been announced by the High Commissioner at the Executive Committee's preceding session and was based on emergency preparedness, voluntary repatriation and the promotion of solutions through the adoption of preventive measures.

11. Preventive action should clearly form an integral part of UNHCR's mandate and should play a central role in its strategic planning, but, for some years, its limited human and financial resources had forced it to concentrate mainly on crisis management. That situation needed to be remedied in future by focusing more on prevention, particularly in volatile regions where there was a danger of mass displacements and where UNHCR had already initiated several programmes. Such a prevention strategy should be based on institution-building, information and training. The series of seminars on refugee law promotion that had been organized jointly with IOM and ICRC in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States was a good example of the kind of training needed. Since the success of such measures would naturally depend on the financial support received by UNHCR, his delegation believed that that type of activity should be included in the general programmes.

12. Since voluntary repatriation was the preferred durable solution for dealing with refugee situations because it enabled refugees to reintegrate in their countries of origin with the support of economic, social and political programmes, the success of repatriation programmes was determined by the degree of integration achieved. The active participation of development agencies and non-governmental organizations was essential in that regard and UNHCR should act as a catalyst to promote such cooperation, since the responsibilities of other United Nations agencies should be more clearly defined at the planning stage.

13. The international community as a whole should commit itself unreservedly to seeking comprehensive solutions to the refugee problem resulting from the tragic war - unprecedented in post-war Europe - currently raging in the former Yugoslavia. The Government of Finland, for its part, would give its full support to efforts already underway. Though it was true that the political dimension was the key to settlement of the conflict, it should be complemented by humanitarian measures. All the necessary human and financial resources should be mobilized without delay in order to avoid the tragic consequences that the approach of winter might have on the civilian population, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Temporary protection was the key to an immediate response to the situation of such refugees, who should, as a general rule, be given relief as close to their homes as possible. However, the concept of temporary protection should under no circumstances be used to serve the purposes of those who practised "ethnic cleansing".

14. His Government, which had already made a contribution of 10 million markkaa, intended to make a further contribution of 18 million markkaa to finance relief activities in the former Yugoslavia. In addition, Finland had decided to receive persons belonging to the most vulnerable groups, under a selection process to be carried out in close collaboration with UNHCR.

15. However, the situation in the former Yugoslavia should not divert attention from emergency situations developing elsewhere. In the Horn of Africa, the tragic plight of Somalia had shocked the world. The complexity

and exceptional scale of the problem had prevented organizations of the United Nations system from tackling it in the best possible way and that incapacity had proved fatal for hundreds of thousands of people. It was now urgent to intensify efforts to find appropriate political and humanitarian solutions.

16. In keeping with its traditions, Finland was giving considerable support to voluntary repatriation programmes and other humanitarian relief activities being carried out in different regions of the African continent, but it was also one of the countries which had given the largest amount of support to the CIREFCA process in Central America.

17. Although UNHCR was regarded as concerning itself only with refugees as defined under the 1951 Convention, its mandate was flexible enough to allow it to intervene in "refugee-like" situations. In such cases, the request for intervention should come through the Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNHCR should be given assurances that it would be provided with the necessary financial and human resources.

18. In conclusion, he said that, since the various causes of population movements were increasingly interlinked, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between flight and persecution and human rights violations and cases where living conditions had been made unbearable through deprivation. Much more research had to be carried out in order better to understand those different kinds of situation. Nevertheless, the scale of such mass movements and the various causes which underlay them should not be an obstacle to the granting of asylum to persons who met the criteria of the 1951 Convention. Better mechanisms should therefore be developed to distinguish legitimate asylum-seekers from others.

19. Mr. de RIEDMATTEN (Switzerland) said that, as had been recognized in the introduction to the Note on International Protection, the main features of today's refugee problem were its great complexity and the diversity of its root causes. Accordingly, the new challenges facing UNHCR and the countries of the international community called for great imagination on the part of the United Nations and for increased cooperation. The task of prevention, to which the High Commissioner had drawn particular attention, would mean that concerted long-term efforts would have to be made to defend and promote democracy, human rights, development and action to combat poverty.

20. Switzerland was ready to contribute actively to UNHCR in the search for durable solutions to the problem of refugees and it supported the proposal for the convening of one or more intersessional meetings of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection. With regard to UNHCR's activities in situations which were not directly covered by the 1951 Convention and in which UNHCR was often called on to intervene by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, he welcomed the results UNHCR had achieved Office as lead agency in the former Yugoslavia, despite the myriad political and operational obstacles it had encountered. In addition to taking direct action in the field and making substantial contributions both in cash and in kind, Switzerland, in keeping with its humanitarian traditions, had received some

70,000 persons who had suffered as a result of the conflict. It believed, like UNHCR, that temporary protection was often the best provisional solution to a refugee problem, provided that there was some burden-sharing, and it would be prepared to consider the setting up of a regionally based system of cooperation under which any massive influx of displaced persons could be managed in a coordinated way. The informal consultations should provide an opportunity for defining common criteria in that regard.

21. In the belief that settling displaced persons as close as possible to their homes was generally the best solution, Switzerland would encourage the parties concerned to cooperate more closely with UNHCR in responding to any emergency needs that might arise in the former Yugoslavia with the onset of winter. In addition, the Swiss Disaster Relief Corps had substantial means at its disposal to contribute to the direct assistance winter preparedness programme, whose success would depend on increased coordination between humanitarian bodies, national relief agencies and non-governmental organizations. UNHCR would have to be in a position to strengthen its operational capacities, especially when launching its programme to provide shelter for the homeless. Switzerland would also be prepared to second experts to UNHCR with a view to improving the coordination of humanitarian activities in Geneva or in the field, not only in Yugoslavia, but also in other areas where UNHCR was active.

22. Despite some encouraging signs in Cambodia, in Central America and in southern Africa, the general refugee situation had been aggravated by serious crises in the Horn of Africa and in Europe. Events which only recently had been regarded as exceptional, such as the exodus of the Iraqi Kurds, seemed fated to be repeated and the resulting impact on UNHCR's budget was a matter of concern to donor countries, which were themselves facing increasing financial difficulties. UNHCR's total budget had in fact gone beyond the ceiling of US\$ 1 billion, a level higher than the 1991 budget, which itself had been regarded as exceptional, but Switzerland would, as far as its means allowed, make every effort to continue to respond to the High Commissioner's appeals. In that connection, a number of improvements would need to be made in the management of general programmes. Sweden's proposals for increasing the Emergency Fund, the Overall Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation and the Programme Reserve should make it possible to introduce more flexibility into the management of such programmes. The proposals should nevertheless be subjected to a more detailed review at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

23. Similarly, the tragedies now unfolding in Africa had no parallel with the problems arising elsewhere, especially in the former Yugoslavia, and it was only by approaches combining humanitarian relief with political solutions and by close collaboration between UNHCR, ICRC and non-governmental organizations that the worst could be avoided. He expressed the hope that the Conference on Somalia, which was due to be held the following week in Geneva, would focus on the search for a comprehensive solution for the Horn of Africa and achieve substantial results.

24. Concerning possible durable solutions for refugee problems, he believed that, there, too, a comprehensive approach should be adopted, combining repatriation and development assistance with a focus on displaced persons,

returnees and the local populations hosting them. The process set in motion by the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) was a good example of such an approach, not only because of the links it established at each of those levels, but also because it had given UNHCR and UNDP an opportunity to conclude an agreement whereby each agency could concentrate exclusively on activities within its competence.

25. UNHCR, like other humanitarian agencies, was having problems in guaranteeing the safety of those of its staff who were working in the field in situations of open conflict and he paid tribute to the courage of those who were striving, often at the risk of their lives, to bring relief to refugees. He commended the dedication of the staff of UNHCR and pledged his support to Mrs. Ogata in the enormous task her Office was carrying out.

26. Mr. SSALI (Uganda) said that he also paid tribute to the High Commissioner, who had mobilized international support for the funding of refugee emergency relief and programmes, and to her staff, who were continuing to carry out UNHCR's work under extremely difficult circumstances.

27. Experience had shown that, if refugee problems were to be solved, there was a need first of all to tackle their root causes: the prime cause was poverty and economic backwardness, especially in developing countries, which were crippled by the debt burden and suffered from unacceptably low financial returns from their exports. That was a situation which the more affluent countries could effectively remedy by giving financial encouragement to entrepreneurial development and by rescheduling, or even cancelling, debts. Developing countries, especially refugee-generating countries, had a moral obligation to maintain law and order and to ensure that justice was done, so that their people would be able to enjoy a climate of peace in which to engage in activities that would promote prosperity and well-being. Thanks to the policies which were being followed by the new Government of Uganda and which focused on national reconciliation and respect for human rights, over 500,000 Ugandan refugees had returned home since 1986.

28. Humanitarian aid agencies could also combat the crises to which refugee movements gave rise by intervening rapidly in serious emergencies. As an example, Lifeline Sudan, following the intensification of conflicts in southern Sudan, had made deliveries of food and other essential items to the thousands of persons who would otherwise have sought asylum in Uganda.

29. Now that peace and stability had been re-established in Uganda, the country was regarded as a safe haven and was currently hosting over 200,000 refugees - Sudanese, Rwandese, Zaireans and others. Their arrival had placed a severe strain in the resources of the local population, which in the past had never benefited from the services extended to refugees because they had always been inadequate as a result of the low-input from UNHCR. The Government of Uganda hoped that the Office would introduce development-oriented projects for river transport in the Arua district, road networks, social infrastructure and farming subsidies, which would promote the socio-economic integration of the refugees and of the communities in which they lived.

30. The prolonged drought which had stricken the country had drastically reduced the refugees' daily food ration of maize and beans, resulting in a sharp increase in cases of malnutrition in the transit camps in the Moyo district, chiefly among children of under 10 years of age. The World Food Programme had taken steps to remedy that situation,*but any reduction in the flow of refugee food supplies could have very serious consequences and all parties concerned should guard against such an eventuality. Owing to a shortage of drugs, morbidity and mortality had increased in the refugee camps. Those shortages were the result partly of the large numbers of refugees and partly of the inability of the Government of Uganda to purchase drugs in sufficient quantities on account of its low earnings from the coffee exports on which the country depended. In such circumstances, it was important that the competent agencies should appeal to donor countries for the necessary resources to provide drugs both for the refugees and for the populations in areas where they were settled.

31. With regard to Uganda's efforts to find durable solutions to the refugee problem, he drew particular attention to the fact that the Government was trying to integrate refugees by making them grants of land which would allow them to be self-sufficient; some 25,000 were to be settled on arable land in the Arua district, while 4,000 Zairians had already been transferred to the Kyaka settlement. The authorities were also providing security and other basic services in those areas.

32. One of his Government's major concerns was to protect the environment by preventing the senseless exploitation of natural resources. The presence of refugees put pressure on the tree cover, which was used for fuel and building materials. If officials of the departments concerned had not intervened in time, the refugees settled in Kiryandongo would quickly have transformed the area into a semi-desert. The task now was to reforest the affected areas and to find the refugees alternative sources of fuel and building materials, failing which no further land grants could be made. The Government hoped that it could obtain international aid for that purpose.

33. Uganda welcomed the fact that the Government of Rwanda and the Rwanda Patriotic Front had begun peace talks in Arusha with a view to ending the civil war which had lasted for nearly two years. A negotiated settlement of the problem could not but benefit Rwandese refugees. In that regard, it should be noted that the claims by the Government of Rwanda that Uganda was allowing rebels to take refuge on its territory had been refuted by an international fact-finding mission. Uganda was committed to the establishment and maintenance of peace in the East African region.

34. Lastly, he paid tribute to the role played by the UNHCR branch office in Kampala in coordinating the implementation of refugee programmes and activities in Uganda, as well as to the role of donor countries and various organizations in making it possible for his country to host the refugees.

35. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), referring to the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, recalled that, at the same time the previous year, the future of those persons had still been highly uncertain. The voluntary repatriation programme for Afghan refugees, launched in July 1990 by a number of agencies, including UNHCR, jointly with the Government of Pakistan, had been making very

little progress. Nevertheless, the Government had insisted that the programme should be continued and UNHCR had followed its lead. Subsequent developments, following the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul, had proved that decision a wise one. Immediately on assuming office, the new Secretary-General of the United Nations had made efforts to find a durable political solution to the Afghan imbroglio in collaboration with all parties involved in the conflict. His bold moves had borne fruit, since the accord signed in Peshawar the previous April, setting up a mechanism for political transition and establishing a Mujahidin Government in Kabul under the leadership of Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, had won a broad measure of support among Afghan Mujahidin. Pakistan sincerely hoped that the new Afghan leaders would succeed in overcoming the difficulties involved in transition and in steering their country towards the rebuilding of its infrastructure and the rehabilitation of its war-ravaged economy.

36. Despite the difficulties awaiting them, Afghan refugees had started to return to their country the moment the new regime in Afghanistan had been established. However, the average weekly rate of repatriation, which at one time had been as high as 90,000, had now fallen to around 40,000, a decline which was attributable in part to the lack of necessary resources to finance certain aspects of the repatriation programme and in part to the onset of winter. Fleeing the fighting around Kabul, 60,000 Afghans had arrived to swell the ranks of their compatriots who were already refugees in Pakistan and who still numbered some 1.9 million. In such circumstances, it was vital that United Nations agencies and donor countries should intensify their efforts to create conditions in Afghanistan conducive to the economic and social reintegration of returnees and others who would follow them, especially by providing employment opportunities.

37. In the meantime, the feeding and maintenance of Afghans who had remained in Pakistan had to be ensured. In 1991, the wheat requirement of those refugees had largely been met for the first time since the World Food Programme had launched its feeding programme on their behalf in 1980. Although Pakistan was grateful to the international community for those contributions in kind, cash contributions to UNHCR's humanitarian assistance programme had fallen to the lowest level ever recorded. The shrinkage in aid made the task of the Government of Pakistan extremely difficult: between March 1991 and March 1992, it had had to cut its staff employed on refugee relief programmes by over 60 per cent. It was vital that the country should be provided with sufficient resources to pursue such programmes if Afghan refugees were not to suffer as a result.

38. The presence of Afghan refugees and their livestock had caused serious environmental degradation over the years. A study by UNDP experts had shown that the damage caused in some areas was almost irreversible and that the rehabilitation of the affected areas would require enormous financial resources. UNDP had identified a number of high priority projects which needed to be undertaken at a cost of US\$ 102 million. Accordingly, Pakistan was appealing to the generosity of donors.

39. Since 1984, Pakistan had been implementing an income-generating project for refugees, with active support from UNHCR and the World Bank. The cost of the third phase of that project was estimated at US\$ 26 million. In that

connection as well, the Government was appealing for financial support from donor countries. All the measures envisaged under the project were essential if the humanitarian efforts undertaken on behalf of Afghan refugees were to be successful.

40. Mr. ATRIANFAR (Islamic Republic of Iran) said the complexity of the refugee problem in its current form could be realistically addressed only in a global context, taking into account its various political, social, economic and cultural aspects, and the relationships between them. There was also a need for a definition of the concept of refugee based on new realities.

41. The refugee problem was a by-product of the injustice of the international system, which had given rise to the development gap between rich and poor nations, the destabilization of the economic and social infrastructures of developing countries, policies of aggression, conflicts, crises, tensions, wars, and human rights violations, all of which led eventually to population movements. Iran, which was host to one of the largest refugee populations in the world, believed that it made little sense to seek solutions to the problem without taking account of its root causes. As had been recognized by the General Assembly and the Executive Committee in many resolutions, as well as by the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it was only by promoting countries' economic growth and social development that new refugee movements could be prevented.

42. He deplored the human tragedy which was unfolding in the former Yugoslavia and stated that many countries, including his own, as well as international and non-governmental organizations, had sent hundreds of tons of humanitarian aid to refugees and displaced persons in that part of the world. If those humanitarian measures could be supplemented by a determined political will on the part of all members of the international community, it should be possible to put an end to Serbia's inhuman actions and to find a viable and acceptable solution to the crisis.

43. The Islamic Republic of Iran was currently hosting almost 3,728,000 refugees, of whom 2,747,000 were Afghans and 981,380 Iraqis, the rest being from Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan and Bangladesh. That total showed a decrease of 7.3 per cent in comparison with the figure reported to the forty-second session of the Executive Committee, as a result of the repatriation process now taking place among the country's various refugee populations.

44. The total UNHCR budgetary allocation for assistance to nearly 4 million refugees in Iran, as part of the general programmes budget, had been kept at around \$15 million, or \$4 per refugee, a figure which, surprising as it might seem, reflected the actual level of international aid to refugees in Iran over the past decade. Food distribution by the World Food Programme was currently reaching only 7 per cent of Afghan and Iraqi refugees. Under those circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran had had to intensify its efforts to compensate for the inadequacy of international assistance. The Government had thus launched a social security programme for refugees which met the basic needs of 55,000 additional refugees and provided them with employment. In addition, it had distributed 780,000 food coupons to Afghan and Iraqi refugees in 1992. Such vast assistance programmes funded by the Government not only

exceeded international aid, but made international contributions to refugee assistance activities seem marginal by comparison.

45. Following the establishment in Afghanistan of a Government involving the participation of the major Mujahidin groups, the repatriation of nearly 2,770,000 Afghan refugees had become one of the Government's major priorities. It had submitted to UNHCR its plan of action for the implementation of that programme, which involved setting up urban, interim and transit camps. Under a memorandum of understanding concluded between the Islamic Government of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and UNHCR, a tripartite commission had been set up to ensure that the repatriation and reintegration of Afghan refugees into their society of origin was effected following a safe and regular procedure. Despite its limited budget, the Islamic Republic of Iran had declared its readiness to launch the return of Afghan refugees, under the auspices of UNHCR, while the voluntary repatriation of nearly 193,000 refugees, which had begun early that year, was continuing without support or assistance from the international community. In that regard, he thanked the Government of Japan for its substantial contribution to that operation. If the international community responded generously to the recent appeal by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on behalf of the reconstruction of Afghanistan, that would certainly enable Iran to assist in the repatriation of a considerable number of Afghan refugees between now and the end of the year, as envisaged under the programmes.

46. In June 1992, the Islamic Republic of Iran had organized, jointly with UNHCR, a three-day seminar in which 18 major non-governmental organizations had participated. The seminar had provided an opportunity for those organizations to familiarize themselves with the refugee situation in Iran and to ask refugees themselves about their needs and about possible solutions to their tragic plight. In accordance with the seminar's conclusions, Iran had recently set up a special group entitled "Commission for the Coordination of NGO Activities in the Islamic Republic of Iran", which was to serve as a focal point for the facilitation and coordination of all NGO activities, whether in refugee assistance or in development projects.

47. He also drew the attention of the members of the Executive Committee to an initiative taken by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to avert new refugee flows across the northern borders of its territory. Following the exacerbation of hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia and, in particular, the conflict that had broken out in the Sadrak region, the Government, fearing an influx of over 15,000 refugees, had set up a reception camp equipped to provide emergency assistance, such as food and medical supplies. That initiative had proved to be a good example of a preventive measure which had effectively halted refugee movements. In that connection, he welcomed the establishment of the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and announced that the Islamic Republic of Iran would be ready to share with that Office the experience it had gained in the course of various natural or man-made disasters.

48. In conclusion, he said that he was deeply concerned by the humanitarian implications of the turn events were taking in northern and southern Iraq. Following the creation of a semi-autonomous State in Iraqi Kurdistan, the 3 million inhabitants of that area were increasingly faced with food and fuel

shortages. There were alarming indications that another human tragedy might be building up in that area, and perhaps also in the south.

49. Mr. LANG (Austria) said that the scale and complexity of the emergencies that had arisen in the course of the past 12 months had severely tested UNHCR's emergency response mechanism, but, in the face of that situation, the Office's response capacity had been shown to be one of the most efficient in the United Nations system.

50. Despite the increase in the total number of refugees in the world, the beginnings of a solution to the problem could be seen in many parts of the world, notably in Asia, Central America and some parts of Africa. Thus, over 90 per cent of the some 1.8 million Iraqi refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in Turkey had been rapidly repatriated. In addition, positive trends were discernible in Cambodia, Viet Nam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in Afghanistan, in Angola, in Mozambique, and in other countries of Africa and in Central America within the framework of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA). Austria was aware of the importance of voluntary repatriation and had contributed to a number of repatriation operations, particularly in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and South Africa. However, it believed that, like UNDP, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs could play a catalytic role in supplementing voluntary repatriation by rehabilitation and reintegration measures.

51. There could be no doubt that human rights violations were often the cause of refugee movements. Austria therefore urged the High Commissioner to continue to cooperate closely with the Commission on Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights and, in particular, to participate in preparations for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. It would also be useful for UNHCR to collaborate with the Secretary-General's special representative on internally displaced persons.

52. His delegation attached great importance to the subject of refugee women and children, a group which represented 80 per cent of the world's refugee population. Thanks to the appointment of special coordinators, the plight of such women and children was no longer marginalized and the first results of coordination activities were already evident.

53. The volume of material assistance activities raised a further question. For the first time in UNHCR's history, the total volume of assistance programmes would be breaking the US\$ 1 billion barrier. He was nevertheless concerned to note that special programmes, and particularly those undertaken at the request of the Secretary-General, had grown disproportionately by comparison with general programmes. That situation, as well as the question of the growth in the overall volume of activities, should be watched closely.

54. In connection with UNHCR's regular programme activities, some delegations had raised the question whether the Programme Reserve should not be increased by 15 per cent to allow for an adjustment in programme activities within the limits of general programme targets, rather than resorting to appeals for special funding. Similar suggestions had been made in the past and had always been supported by his delegation.

55. The armed conflict now raging in the former Yugoslavia had created over 2.8 million displaced persons, tens of thousands of whom had been subjected, and were still being subjected, to indiscriminate repression. With the onset of winter, thousands of them were in danger of dying of hunger and access to victims had now become vital. The Executive Committee should appeal to the co-Chairmen of the London Conference to intensify their action in the political field so that UNHCR, ICRC and the non-governmental organizations concerned could have access to civilian victims of the conflict. In that connection, Austria endorsed the appeals by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the former Yugoslavia, Mr. Mazowiecki, that all parties should adhere strictly to the principles of international humanitarian law.

56. The theory of temporary protection, which had figured prominently in the discussions of the Sub-Committee on International Protection, had been put into practice for the first time in assisting the Croatians, most of whom had since returned to their homes under a tripartite agreement concluded between Croatia, UNHCR and Austria. Over 60,000 displaced persons from regions affected by the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina were currently benefiting from such protection.

57. In addition, Austria had funded a substantial humanitarian assistance programme in the region. Some US\$ 16 million had been allocated by the Federal Government to bilateral and multilateral projects, while the provincial Governments had contributed a further US\$ 6 million. Together with individual contributions made by the Austrian people, that brought the total amount of Austria's financial assistance to the victims of that tragic war to over US\$ 100 million. In a spirit of solidarity, the Government of Austria intended to continue its humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia, giving priority to the following areas: continuation of projects for refugees and displaced persons already under way; assistance to local authorities, primarily in Croatia, in creating winter-proof shelter for refugees; support for reintegration programmes launched by the Croatian Government; and medical treatment in Austria for the injured, as well as for particularly vulnerable persons for whom such treatment was not available in the former Yugoslavia.

58. A clear distinction had to be drawn between refugee movements, on the one hand, and migrations or other population movements, on the other. Like most other countries in Western Europe, the vast majority of requests for asylum received by Austria (some 90 per cent) were not from refugees. That situation clearly showed that abuse of the procedure for applying for refugee status by migrants, economic or otherwise, undermined the whole institution of asylum. Furthermore, such abuses involved a disproportionate expenditure of public funds which could better be used in assisting those who were genuine refugees and who were in real need. It was for those reasons that Austria, like other countries, had established accelerated procedures, especially for claims that were manifestly unfounded, and was trying to harmonize those procedures with those of other countries.

59. Lastly, he expressed his Government's deep appreciation of what UNHCR and its partners - including non-governmental organizations - had achieved under extremely difficult circumstances and paid tribute to the memory of those who had given their lives in the service of humanity.

60. Mgr. PIERRE (Holy See) said the report of the High Commissioner (A/AC.96/793) showed that, in the course of the past year, UNHCR had become involved in areas of activity that were as yet unexplored. That should be a further encouragement to the international community to grant it the resources it needed to strengthen its response capacity, so that it could respond rapidly to new emergencies. It should also be supported in its search for durable solutions and in the initiatives it had taken to prevent refugee flows.

61. The Holy See welcomed the increasing recognition that UNHCR's competence extended to persons forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, serious and widespread disturbances or acts of violence. It should be possible for the same reasoning to be applied to persons who were internally displaced for similar reasons.

62. However, the international community could not overlook the fact that, together with political divergencies, ethnic conflicts and other types of confrontation, poverty and the factors that caused it were among the prime reasons for political instability. It was therefore not surprising that the majority of refugees came from developing countries.

63. In its search for solutions, the international community should be guided by a willingness to respect the human rights of all refugees. Refugees were not merely assisted persons; they shared the same rights and obligations as others. It followed that their protection should include all the conditions necessary for a fully human existence.

64. Unfortunately, assistance to refugees was now being hampered by fears of too large an increase in their numbers, as well as of clashes with other cultures, and there was thus an urgent need to foster a more receptive attitude. In order to identify the causes which led people to flee their homes and to find durable solutions, internationally acceptable rules should be adopted on territorial asylum. The search for common solutions was essential and arguments which made the granting of the right of asylum subject to the sole criterion of national interest should be refuted.

65. The matter fell squarely within the responsibilities of States, particularly if they were democratic and economically developed: inaction, or inadequate efforts on their part would be in contradiction with the principles they rightly considered to be fundamental to their culture, which was based on the premise that all were equal in dignity. Such States should do everything in their power to remedy the root causes of the refugee problem.

66. In addition, the protection of the human rights of displaced persons would require the adoption by the international community of specific legal instruments and appropriate coordination mechanisms, so that intervention by it could no longer be considered as violations of national sovereignty.

67. The Churches, in collaboration with other institutions, had a major role to play in offering refugees the welcome, solidarity and assistance they needed. They could mobilize energies and work towards ensuring that societies and Governments adopted more open attitudes. They were already involved in

that task and the aid agencies they sponsored were active on the front line wherever refugees were to be found.

68. Much of the burden of providing assistance to refugees fell to neighbouring countries, which did not always have enough resources. Accordingly, that burden should be equally shared by the international community. UNHCR was rightly working along those lines.

69. Refugee status was, by definition, transitory. A refugee could and should aspire to return to his country as soon as conditions had returned to normal and as soon as his life and liberty were no longer in danger.

70. When integration in a country was not feasible, it was UNHCR's task to insist that refugees should be protected from discrimination, refoulement and expulsion, that they should be treated humanely and that their fundamental rights should be respected. In addition, women and children, as indicated in the information papers concerning them, deserved special attention.

71. Temporary protection was often provided in camps: since such camps sometimes proved necessary, they should be organized to allow life to go on. A camp could be regarded only as an emergency situation and, consequently, as a temporary arrangement.

72. The principle of voluntary repatriation could not be called in question. Recent events showed that many persons had been sent back against their will to a sometimes tragic fate, either by sea or through minefields, where they had met their deaths.

73. His delegation shared the High Commissioner's view that voluntary repatriation should be envisaged as a truly durable and humanitarian solution. To that end, it should be accompanied by comprehensive reintegration and rehabilitation measures designed to meet immediate, short-term and long-term needs and to promote self-sufficiency and development both for the returnees themselves and for the communities affected.

74. In conclusion, he stressed that the refugee cause was central to the concerns of the Catholic Church. A few days earlier, the Papal Council "Cor Unum" and the Papal Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Displaced Persons had published a document entitled "Refugees, a challenge to solidarity". Indeed, solidarity on the part of the communities welcoming refugees and the organizations taking responsibility for their welfare was the only attitude that could eliminate the factors that caused such human tragedies.

75. Mr. UKAWA (Japan) said that, since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, there had been an increasing number of emergencies and crises around the world. The flow of refugees which had resulted had overstretched UNHCR's capacities. The High Commissioner and her staff had nevertheless responded with commitment and compassion. Staff in the field were working in difficult situations and, in some cases, were risking their lives.

76. During the past year, some progress had been made, particularly with regard to voluntary repatriation. Under the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees, voluntary repatriation to Viet Nam had continued steadily. Large numbers of persons had also returned to South Africa and Angola. Since March 1992, the repatriation component of the peace-keeping operation in Cambodia had already enabled one third of the refugees to return. The High Commissioner expected all Cambodian refugees in Thailand to have returned home by early 1993 in time to take part in the elections. In Afghanistan, over 1 million returns from Pakistan and Iran had been recorded. Japan, for its part, had made a substantial contribution to UNHCR's programme in the countries concerned and would continue to provide assistance, since the repatriation process was as yet far from completion.

77. However, the success of voluntary repatriation operations depended on the reintegration of returnees into their country of origin, and that called for sustained international support for rehabilitation and reconstruction, which were clearly outside UNHCR's mandate and would depend on close coordination between agencies, non-governmental organizations and the Governments concerned.

78. In the former Yugoslavia, as in Somalia, no political solution was in sight and, as a result, there was a massive need for humanitarian assistance that was a major challenge for UNHCR and the international community. Japan endorsed the action taken by UNHCR to assist displaced persons in the former Yugoslavia; however, it believed that the Office should be cautious about moving outside its traditional sphere of activities, particularly in view of its own limited financial and human resources. The possibility of burden-sharing with other agencies should be further explored.

79. The concept of "temporary protection" pending the eventual return of refugees to their countries should also be given further consideration.

80. Now that the total number of refugees had reached 17 million, UNHCR's budget was expected to exceed US\$ 1 billion for the first time; that figure reflected the extent of the international community's support. UNHCR would have to redouble its efforts to achieve efficient administration, improved transparency and financial accountability if it was to secure the continued support of donors. Japan would continue to be one of the major donors; in 1992, as in 1991, its contribution had been over US\$ 100 million. Public information activities directed towards donor countries had also been a significant element in UNHCR's success.

81. After an extensive debate in Parliament, Japan had adopted legislation enabling it to send forces to Cambodia as part of the United Nations transitional authority in that country. His country also shared the general concern about the issue of environmental preservation; in response to the High Commissioner's appeal, it was ready to make a contribution by making the services of an environmental coordinator and funding for that purpose available to UNHCR.

82. Mr. MOSAASE (Lesotho), expressing his delegation's confidence in the High Commissioner, said that the cornerstone of any solution to the refugee problem was the achievement of peace. Without it, repression and persecution

would always create yet more refugees. In that connection, he deplored the increase in violence in the country bordering on his own. It was to be feared that anarchy might prevail and that an influx of refugees into Lesotho would result. Since the beginning of the year, his country had also been receiving asylum-seekers from Central and even West Africa, the majority being Zairians. Unfortunately, Lesotho was affected by drought and rising unemployment; it had nevertheless been applying United Nations resolutions, especially on non-refoulement.

83. In less than two months, Lesotho would be holding the first general election for 22 years; it was to be hoped that the newly elected Government would respect the laws applicable to refugees. In that connection, he deplored the statement made in paragraph 1.25.28 of document A/AC.96/793 (Part I) and reserved his delegation's position on any decision that might be taken on the matter at the current session.

84. Mr. BENHIMA (Morocco) said that, although the end of the cold war had made it possible to find political solutions to a number of conflicts, the current international context, whose features were not easy to define, was unfortunately characterized by an outbreak of ethnic and religious conflicts. Document A/AC.96/798 and the introductory statement by the High Commissioner gave a detailed account of the situation of refugees, who numbered 17 million; finding a solution to their problems would be an enormous task. It would call for increased solidarity on the part of the international community and mean that even greater financial resources had to be made available to the Office. In particular, there was a need to strengthen UNHCR's emergency response capacity, together with that of other United Nations agencies, such as WHO, UNICEF and WFP, and of non-governmental organizations.

85. As far as voluntary repatriation was concerned, he noted that encouraging results had been achieved in Central America, Afghanistan and Cambodia. Such actions should be encouraged in other regions of the world, particularly in view of the fact that voluntary repatriation had been shown to speed up the achievement of political solutions.

86. With regard to international protection, his delegation welcomed the continuation of the work of the Working Group on International Protection. The adaptation of the basic principles of international protection would lead to satisfactory results only if it took account of both the interests of States and the rights of refugees in a climate of cooperation, flexibility and transparency. Cooperation between humanitarian relief agencies and human rights bodies was also essential.

87. Since women and children accounted for 80 per cent of the refugees in the world, his delegation was pleased to note that, in the past few years, UNHCR had been intensifying its efforts to assist those particularly vulnerable persons. In that connection, the funding by the Norwegian Government of the post of Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children was a praiseworthy initiative.

88. In Africa, which had 30 per cent of the world's refugees, there were two areas of special needs, Somalia and Mozambique, which were suffering from a combination of civil war and severe drought. The international community

should make special efforts to give speedy relief to the populations concerned.

89. The conflict now raging in the former Yugoslavia was an unprecedented humanitarian problem that was being aggravated by systematic human rights violations in the name of "ethnic cleansing". The generous response by the international community to UNHCR's appeals had made it possible to bring some relief to the populations affected. The Moroccan Government was planning to send a consignment of food aid, and was currently studying ways of delivering it. In that connection, he hoped that the talks that had started in Geneva between the warring factions would lead to a political solution.

90. Lastly, he pointed out that, on the basis of Security Council resolution 681 (1990) and of the recommendations of the Executive Committee, Palestinian refugees should be given full protection in accordance with the international instruments in force.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.



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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 475th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 6 October 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. LANUS (Argentina)

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General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (A/AC.96/798, A/AC.96/799) (continued)

1. Mr. OLUSOLA (Organization of African Unity) said that, since the Executive Committee's last session, the number of refugees and displaced persons in Africa had increased alarmingly. Africa now held the unenviable record of hosting 6 million refugees and over 12 million displaced persons. The root causes of the problem were conflicts, human rights abuses, natural disasters such as drought, famine and adverse social and economic developments. He hoped that current efforts to eradicate the apartheid system in South Africa would help to restore peace and security and speed up the return of South African exiles.
2. The conditions of refugees in Africa had been steadily deteriorating not only because their numbers had been increasing, but also because the gap between their needs and the resources available to meet them had widened over the years. OAU members States had been tireless in their efforts to provide assistance, but, in the process, their capabilities had been overstretched, resulting in the serious dislocation of their economic and social infrastructures. Fortunately, the international community, and particularly UNHCR, had been willing partners in the effort to provide humanitarian assistance.
3. In northern Africa, the longstanding war between the Polisario movement and the Kingdom of Morocco had resulted in the exodus of more than 169,000 Sahrawis into neighbouring Algeria. It was to be hoped that the United Nations/OAU plan for the holding of a referendum would help solve that problem once and for all. With regard to Ethiopia, war and famine in the Somali Republic had driven out over 367,000 Ethiopian refugees who had been settled in refugee camps in Somalia. The latter had now settled in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and were being assisted by the Ethiopian Government and the international community.
4. In the Somali Republic itself, civil war had led to large influxes of refugees into Kenya and Ethiopia. He hoped that current efforts being made by OAU, the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as well as by countries of the subregion, to find a durable solution to the problem would bear fruit. Where assistance to victims in Somalia was concerned, experience had shown that large sums had to be spent on ensuring the security and proper administration of relief supplies and he appealed to all African countries in distress which required assistance from UNHCR and the international community to do all they could to enable those costs to be reduced.
5. The civil war in Liberia had caused some 1.2 million people out of a total population of 2.5 million to become refugees in neighbouring countries, or displaced persons in their own country. However, the efforts deployed by countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to solve the problem gave grounds for hope and deserved international support. Similarly, internal conflicts in Rwanda had led to renewed refugee influxes into Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Burundi and had displaced thousands of people within the country. The recently created OAU Neutral Military Observer Group had helped to achieve a cease-fire and to establish security.

6. In the case of Burundi, measures had been taken to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of nationals of that country who had been living in exile as refugees. The Burundi Government had signed an agreement with the Government of Tanzania and with UNHCR to further such repatriation and some persons had already returned.
7. In Angola, the improved situation following the cease-fire between the Government and the UNITA movement had enabled a number of refugees to return and to participate in the multi-party elections which had taken place the previous month. In Mozambique, however, despite efforts by the Government to reach an agreement with RENAMO, acts of violence against innocent people had continued, resulting in the exodus of large numbers of refugees, particularly to Malawi.
8. While African Governments were committed to the eradication of the refugee problem on the continent, a partnership would have to be forged between them and the international community if the humanitarian challenge presented by refugees was to be met. OAU continued to urge the international community to show the necessary political will and to respond more forcefully to the needs and aspiration of Africa's uprooted communities. The mandate of the High Commissioner should be broadened to include cross-mandate, cross-border assistance to all needy persons in the same community, such as was planned in the Horn of Africa along the borders of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan.
9. He noted with gratitude that OAU's funding was now coming from more diversified sources, especially from the private sector in Japan. He urged UNHCR to tap private sector sources in OAU member countries through more active collaboration with organizations such as the African Development Bank (ADB). In conclusion, he appealed to all OAU members States which had made pledges to UNHCR to fulfil and sustain those pledges.
10. Mr. VILLARROEL (Philippines) said that, as had been pointed out by the High Commissioner, South-East Asia had been a testing ground for innovative measures for dealing with the unprecedented challenges facing UNHCR. As a first asylum country, the Philippines had been particularly struck by the statement in paragraph 17 of the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/799) that the problem of protection became more complicated where persons within the Office's competence were indistinguishable from other needy groups. It was further stated that, in the case of persons whose claims to refugee status had been rejected by the competent authorities and who were deemed not to fall within the Office's competence, UNHCR could, exceptionally, play a limited supportive role to facilitate return. He would appreciate clarification as to whether such a policy would mean a further reduction of UNHCR activities for persons considered as non-refugees in first asylum countries.
11. While it was true that over 30,000 Vietnamese had now returned home voluntarily within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA), many still remained in first asylum countries and he agreed with the representative of Thailand that more needed to be done to help such countries deal with the undesirable problem of stranded non-refugees.
12. He welcomed the statement by the High Commissioner that the new thrust described in the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/799) would not involve any redefinition of UNHCR's mandate. The mandate should nevertheless be

kept flexible in order to keep pace with rapidly changing circumstances: the Office would often have to perform tasks other than those originally designed for it if it was to respond to emergency situations.

13. He also endorsed the Working Group's findings regarding the need for greater inter-agency cooperation in such areas as human rights monitoring, peace-keeping activities, development assistance and orderly migration and agreed that the Office should seek specific endorsement from the United Nations Secretary-General or the General Assembly to act as needs arose. In particular, there should be closer cooperation in actions involving refugee women and children, as well as those involving refugees and the environment.

14. On funding, he noted with satisfaction that donor response so far had been generous and he hoped that that would continue to be the case in the coming year. He shared UNHCR's serious concern over staff security and paid tribute to staff who were working in the field in extremely difficult circumstances. Within UNHCR itself, he was convinced that better geographical and gender balance among staff would ensure greater flexibility in effectively meeting new challenges.

15. He expressed full support for the High Commissioner's strategy and assured UNHCR of his Government's continued collaboration in the pursuit of its humanitarian objectives.

16. Mr. MORVAY (Hungary) said that he agreed with the concept of preventive diplomacy as outlined by the High Commissioner in her introductory statement. He shared the view of the Working Group on International Protection that UNHCR should continue to play a preventive role by taking initiatives to promote humanitarian actions, as well as by supporting international peacemaking and peace-keeping processes. His Government supported the High Commissioner's efforts to create effective mechanisms for the preventive protection of refugees; such efforts which were now bearing fruit in Croatia.

17. The recent increase in numbers of refugees in many parts of the world had challenged not only the international community's ability to achieve regional and global security, but also UNHCR's capacity to respond quickly and effectively. The brutal conflict in the former Yugoslavia, involving grave human rights abuses, had produced the largest number of refugees and displaced persons since the end of the Second World War.

18. The Hungarian people were deeply concerned at the situation of the Hungarian minority in Serbian Voivodina and other areas under Serbian control. The policy of settling thousands of Serbian refugees on territories inhabited by ethnic Hungarians and others, thus changing by force the ethnic composition of whole areas, could have fatal consequences and called for an immediate response. Attempts to create so-called "ethnically pure" States had more than once in history resulted in crimes against humanity.

19. His country had taken in some 50,000 refugees, chiefly from Romania, between 1988 and 1990 and, in addition, was now giving temporary protection to some 80,000 persons from the former Yugoslavia. So far, some 60,000 persons, including 35,000 Croats, 20,000 ethnic Hungarians and 5,500 Bosnians, had been accommodated in temporary shelters or in the homes of Hungarian families, while about 12,500 had been settled in refugee camps. That represented a considerable

burden, particularly in view of the fact that the longer the refugees stayed in Hungary, the less likely it became that they would ever be able to return to their homes. There was an urgent need to enlarge the capacity of reception centres. Hungary had already had to cope with the heavy burden of the transition to political democracy and to a market economy and believed that the additional burden of sheltering refugees should be shared with other, more developed States with sound economies. His Government was nevertheless determined to fulfil its international obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

20. As the war in Yugoslavia continued, UNHCR was playing an important stabilizing role and his Government greatly appreciated its assistance. He was also grateful to donor countries which had given financial support. Hungary was participating in a trilateral initiative with Croatia and UNHCR to prepare for an organized and voluntary repatriation of Croatian refugees currently in Hungary and he hoped that similar cooperation might eventually be established with other independent States of the former Yugoslavia.

21. His Government was currently preparing new legislation on asylum which would be in keeping with its new status as a constitutional democracy. It intended to withdraw Hungary's reservation on territorial restriction made at the time of its accession to the 1951 Convention, but the process was likely to be slow. Hungary needed to exchange experiences with other countries where legislative reform was concerned and would need assistance with training legal staff and he appealed to the international community to provide it with financial support for that purpose.

22. Where the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was concerned, Hungary needed to feel that its burden was shared more equitably and that it could count on the continued help of the rest of the world. Only with further assistance would it be able to pursue a refugee policy based on truly humanitarian principles.

23. He assured the Committee of his Government's continuing support for international efforts to provide relief and assistance to refugees and displaced persons, both in their countries of origin and in receiving countries. Hungary would also be prepared to participate in joint measures to prevent new mass exoduses.

24. Mr. ITHETE (Namibia) said the problem of refugees had afflicted African countries for two decades, but was now of such a magnitude that it was beyond the ability of many of them to tackle. The total number of African refugees now exceeded the population of some African countries. The problem was exacerbated by the worst drought in almost 50 years, especially in the southern part of the continent.

25. There had nevertheless been some encouraging developments, particularly the peace agreement recently signed by the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO and the successful elections held in Angola. Those developments should make it easier for refugees to return and resettle in peace in their countries of origin. The situation in South Africa, on the other hand, was an explosive one and the international community should give all possible support to peaceful negotiations so that a lasting solution could be found.

26. In the Horn of Africa, drought and starvation combined with civil war had destroyed the social fabric of Somalia and the same problems were affecting the peoples of Ethiopia, the Sudan and Mozambique. In West Africa, over 800,000 refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone were still in need of every assistance the international community could provide.

27. The sufferings of over 2.6 million people in the former Yugoslavia were heartbreaking and international response often seemed painfully slow. He therefore wholeheartedly supported the 6-point strategy outlined by the High Commissioner in her opening statement, particularly with regard to enhancing emergency response and strengthening protection.

28. His Government had introduced procedures designed to create favourable conditions for asylum-seekers and would-be refugees in Namibia as required by United Nations and OAU conventions. In April 1992, it had hosted a successful meeting of the OAU Coordinating Committee on Assistance to Refugees in Africa and it had appointed an adviser on refugee matters who would liaise with UNHCR and other relevant agencies. With assistance from UNHCR, a permanent settlement for refugees had been established at Osire, headed by a resident administrator, and arrangements had been made for the medical care of refugees at two nearby hospitals. He appealed to the international community to help Namibia meet the needs of future asylum-seekers and refugees.

29. He thanked the High Commissioner and her staff for so successfully tackling their enormous task and pledged his Government's support and cooperation in combating the refugee problem.

30. Mrs. SAMOYA (Observer for Burundi) said that she agreed with previous speakers that voluntary repatriation programmes could not succeed without the political will to tackle the causes of refugee flows. Efforts in her own country, from which many had fled following recent events, but which was also a country of asylum, were being concentrated on the consolidation of national unity, the democratization of political life and respect for human rights. A charter of national unity adopted by referendum offered sound prospects of lasting peace and security for all citizens. A national commission had been set up to organize the return, reception and reintegration of Burundi refugees. A new constitution adopted some six months previously provided a firm basis for the democratization of the country's political life and elections were scheduled for March 1993. In addition to ratifying a number of international instruments based on respect for human rights, including the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, her Government had recently set up a human rights centre and had repealed emergency measures introduced during the recent period of ethnic unrest.

31. Since the establishment of the national commission for refugees, 29,000 refugees out of the approximately 200,000 who had fled as a result of the events of April 1992 had been voluntarily repatriated, as had 49,500 of the 50,000 displaced following unrest in the north of the country in August 1988 and 35,000 out of the 40,000 displaced by the events of November 1991. The tripartite agreement on Burundi refugees living in Tanzania concluded between the Governments of Burundi and Tanzania and UNHCR was continuing to work well and she thanked the Government of Tanzania for everything it had done and was still doing for the refugees.

32. In extending its thanks to all other countries and organizations which had helped in the repatriation effort, her Government wished to reiterate its appeal for assistance in coping with the countless problems which arose in connection with the implementation of the voluntary repatriation policy. Unfortunately, small hostile groups still operating both inside and outside the country were trying to undermine that policy by preaching ethnic hatred. The international community could rest assured that it was the Burundi population's most ardent wish that all the sons and daughters of the country, wherever they might be and whatever their ethnic origin, should make their contribution to the construction of a united, democratic and economically prosperous Burundi.

33. Mr. KULAWIEC (Observer for the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic) stressed the importance of concentrating on the causes of the refugee problem. Humanitarian steps by the international community should be preceded wherever possible by action at the political, economic and, if necessary, military levels. International pressure for the achievement of a just peace in conflict regions and the restoration of an acceptable standard of human rights in countries of origin was the key to the problem. If political and economic sanctions failed to bring about positive results, particularly in the case of armed conflicts, the international community should press, perhaps even resorting to the use of force, for a speedy cessation of hostilities. The best way of helping potential refugees was to eliminate their need to seek asylum. Effective assistance by advanced countries to poorer States striving for social and economic progress was likewise called for as a means of solving economic problems which were also a source of increased migration.

34. After paying tribute to the work of UNHCR and, in particular, to the cooperation between UNHCR and other structures of the international community both within and outside the United Nations, he called for further efforts to eliminate duplication and to make assistance to refugees and victims of conflicts such as that in the former Yugoslavia more effective. One way of guaranteeing greater effectiveness would be to ensure the broadest possible participation of representatives of Member States of the United Nations in UNHCR's activities. His Government was prepared, within the limits of its possibilities, to assist UNHCR, inter alia, through the participation of Czech and Slovak specialists in the work of expert groups in various parts of the world. It would also welcome intensified exchanges of information with UNHCR concerning legal matters and the situation in countries of origin and asylum, closer cooperation in the preparation and implementation of projects involving care for refugees and medical and technical cooperation and further special courses organized by UNHCR to improve the professional skills of its workers dealing with refugee problems.

35. His Government considered that United Nations bodies - not necessarily UNHCR - should play a more active role in monitoring situations that might result in refugee flows and should take steps to prevent such situations and to coordinate international assistance to refugees and persons in affected regions. For that reason, it supported the idea of setting up an international information and monitoring system. The Yugoslav conflict had revealed the international community's lack of preparedness for solving such crises and had pointed to the need for prevention based on a comprehensive approach to security not limited to military factors alone. Progress in that regard had, in his view, been achieved at the recent Helsinki meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

36. The main obstacles to solving the refugee problem were the restrictive asylum policies of some Western countries and the large and growing number of asylum-seekers, many of whom were economic migrants. His Government took the view that reasonable immigration policies with immigration quotas would substantially reduce the number of asylum-seekers and consequently also the pressure on genuine refugees. If a foreigner had no chance of being granted an immigration visa, he was tempted to present himself as a refugee. A new problem had emerged in Africa, where migration often was not the result of political persecution, but of food shortages. The international community should pay greater attention to such migrants, since famine often led to political instability followed by armed conflicts. International cooperation between States was also very important in solving problems of illegal migration. In that context, his Government opposed the attempts of some European States to solve their problems to the detriment of other States. Lastly, he drew attention to the danger of xenophobia and to the need for long-term information and enlightenment programmes for the benefit of the populations of countries of asylum. The psychological effects of concentrating large groups of refugees in one place should not be overlooked, particularly if that place had economic troubles of its own. Persons whose refugee status had been recognized should not create ghettos in the country of asylum, but should try to become integrated rapidly within their new society.

37. Mr. KOZLOWSKI (Observer for Poland) said that his Government wished to confirm its determination to fulfil its international obligations under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. It greatly appreciated the leadership which the High Commissioner had brought to her Office and understood her visit to Poland to be the expression of UNHCR's practical interest in the situation of the countries of central and eastern Europe. The specific situation in the region called for deeper understanding of the problems facing Poland and its neighbours. On the one hand, Poland was under increasing pressure to receive more refugees in order to protect western European countries from the influx of migrants from the east and the south - in other words, to stop being merely a country of transit. On the other hand, the majority of refugees entering Poland still did not regard that country as a country of destination. The phenomenon was not, as it were, one of "refugees from", but one of "refugees to". In that context, he expressed appreciation for the active role of UNHCR representatives in determining refugee status.

38. He fully agreed with the previous speaker's view concerning the broadest participation of representatives of United Nations Member States in UNHCR activities. He did not, however, mean only representatives from the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Hungary and Poland. The situation in the countries of the former Soviet Union called for the broader involvement of representatives and experts from those countries in the work of UNHCR. Monitoring the refugee situation in those countries without the presence of representatives from that part of Europe appeared completely useless. In efforts to expand the number of signatories of the 1951 Convention, close cooperation with the new democracies of Eastern Europe was essential.

39. The dramatic developments in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and, in particular, in Bosnia and Herzegovina had given rise to great concern in his country. The policy of ethnic cleansing was unequivocally condemned. The mission of Mr. Mazowiecki, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, to the region had been carefully followed by Polish public opinion. His

Government believed that prompt and accurate implementation of at least some of Mr. Mazowiecki's recommendations would prevent further deterioration of the human rights situation in the former Yugoslavia. The second mission, which was due to start shortly, would represent an important step in the international community's concerted response to the crisis. In that context, he stressed his Government's preparedness to assist war refugees, especially children, from the former Yugoslavia and recalled the official statement on that subject made by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Suchocka. In conclusion, he said that Poland was ready to participate in joint measures to prevent new mass exoduses of refugees.

40. Mr. BALOI (Observer for Mozambique) expressed the gratitude of the people and Government of his country to the peoples and agencies of the United Nations, as well as to the Governments and non-governmental organizations represented in the Executive Committee, for their assistance to Mozambique. Thanks were particularly due to the neighbouring countries which had, despite their own difficult economic circumstances, generously provided refuge to Mozambican citizens. He was honoured to be the first member of his Government to announce, in a forum such as the Executive Committee, the conclusion of a peace agreement after two years of difficult negotiations.

41. While the cease-fire in Mozambique was a cause for hope and rejoicing, it was also a source of uncertainty and apprehension. Under normal conditions, repatriation usually signified a move from difficult circumstances to better ones. The situation in Mozambique was unfortunately an exception to that rule; the refugees would be moving from reasonably good circumstances to more difficult conditions. They would be returning to areas totally devastated by war and by the worst drought in living memory. Fully aware of that reality, his Government had drawn up a strategy for national reconstruction consisting of an emergency phase a reconstruction phase and a development phase. To speak of a development plan in Mozambique was not possible at present because of the millions of internally and externally displaced persons. Special emphasis was therefore being placed on the emergency phase of the strategy, which covered activities aimed at resettling and stabilizing the displaced and returnee populations, as well as demobilized military personnel.

42. With the direct involvement of provincial and district authorities in refugee settlement areas in neighbouring countries, his Government had undertaken a survey of basic requirements for the first phase of national reconstruction, particularly the identification of sites for reception and transit centres, resettlement areas coinciding with the refugees' home areas and sites for the construction and rehabilitation of wells and water supply boreholes, as well as for the construction of schools and clinics. The plan was also concerned with questions of land distribution and the supply of seeds and tools. Work had begun before the cease-fire and the main emphasis at that time had been on areas from which most of the refugee population, particularly in Malawi, originated. Unfortunately, security conditions had been very poor and only a little of the preparatory work had been completed.

43. Unless immediate action was taken to speed up the repatriation process, including the establishment of basic conditions for the reception and resettlement of the refugees, there was a danger of a large-scale human disaster. Expecting many refugees to remain in the camps even after the cease-fire came into force in order to see how the situation inside Mozambique developed before deciding whether to return home was, in his view, not only

unrealistic, but also dangerous, since it could lead to failure to take urgent action on the ground. It was far more likely that the refugees would return spontaneously as soon as they felt that the security situation was no longer a cause for concern. The very first meeting between the President of Mozambique and the leader of RENAMO had been followed by the spontaneous return of 14,000 refugees in the province of Tete alone. In order to avoid the worst, the Norwegian Council for Refugees was currently sponsoring teams to work in refugee camps in Malawi and Zimbabwe with a view to promoting organized return.

44. His Government was eager to know what part UNHCR proposed to play, particularly in the decisive phase of national reconstruction. The repatriation exercise had to include concrete action to guarantee the safety and dignity of returnees. The country today was devastated. Millions of persons had been displaced or had become refugees. There would be thousands of men trained only to make war whose lives would have to be directed towards activities aimed at rebuilding the country if the peace agreement was not to crumble completely. Mozambique lacked the resources to carry out that task on its own and would continue to rely on the international community for support and assistance. His Government pledged itself to employ the same vigour, dedication and commitment in struggling for the peaceful reconstruction and reconciliation of the whole Mozambican nation as those with which it had pursued the goal of achieving peace agreement.

45. Mr. BAKHMIN (Observer for the Russian Federation) said that the collapse of centralized State structures in the former Soviet Union had been accompanied by long-term armed conflicts which affected the interests of many States. Even more serious was the suffering of large groups of people and entire nations, including some in Europe, which had seemed safe from large-scale social disasters. As a leading universal humanitarian organization, UNHCR bore the burden of alleviating the consequences of social conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere. His delegation welcomed the High Commissioner's efforts in dealing with such situations and in seeking at strategic solutions to the problems arising from mass refugee flows. The Russian Federation was doing its best to help, despite its own economic and social hardships: 200 children from the zone of fighting in the former Yugoslavia had been accepted, Russian aircraft were being used for evacuating refugees and transporting supplies and a new humanitarian convoy was being formed on Russian territory.

46. The Russian Federation itself had not been spared tragic events. It had accepted about 1 million people, many of them children and disabled, forced to leave their homes for various reasons, including armed conflict in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Moldova and other republics of the former Soviet Union. Some 30,000 persons were entering the central and southern regions of the country each month and the situation was worsening. Facilities to deal with them barely existed; a centralized federal-level migration service had been formed only two months previously, by presidential decree, to define the status and safeguards for refugees and the displaced persons. Further measures, both of an emergency and a long-term nature, were being prepared, the main projects being in the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions of central Russia. For the second half of 1992, the Government had allocated some 3 billion roubles to that end. Programme implementation was complicated by the lack of a legal

basis but two bills, drafted with UNHCR participation and international expert appraisal, had been adopted on first reading by the Supreme Soviet to deal with status and guarantees for refugees and displaced persons.

47. The situation in Russia was unique. There were the well-known problems of local prejudice, finance, administration, accommodation, food and medicine, but the very nature and scale of the problems would require solutions not typical of the everyday practice of international humanitarian organizations. His country would have great difficulty in tackling the problems alone and would be grateful to all countries and organizations for any contribution, possibly including an evaluation mission.

48. Although cases of asylum-seekers might seem less important, the number had grown in his country during the past year, when asylum had been requested, through diplomatic channels, by 450 Iraqis, 520 Ethiopians, 230 Somalis and other nationalities. In addition, the number of Afghan refugees had been calculated at some 20,000. Although national legislation to judge the status of such persons was still being drafted, there was reason to regard their situation as relevant to UNHCR in accordance with the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, as well as the High Commissioner's relevant decisions.

49. The problems in territories of the former Soviet Union were liable to cause further migration flows towards the countries of traditional asylum in Europe, with the risk of heightening social tensions and complicating the task of political stabilization there. Although Russia had great potential resources, the scope of the current problems surpassed national and regional limits. The Russian Federation would continue, however, to observe the principles of international humanitarian cooperation and was about to accede to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol; it had also decided to establish a UNHCR Bureau in Moscow.

50. His delegation reiterated its appreciation of the High Commissioner's work and the role of UNHCR and hoped that the requests he had made would be considered with understanding.

51. Mr. NDISALE (Observer for Malawi) said that the High Commissioner's visit to Malawi in February 1992 had attested to her unfailing concern for the plight of refugees in Malawi; she had been able to observe the refugees' situation and the burden on the host country. Malawi could not possibly cope with the refugee problem in its territory without the support of UNHCR and the donor community, for which his delegation expressed its sincere thanks.

52. The events of the past two years, including progress towards a peaceful solution to the civil strife in Mozambique, had aroused hopes that some of the causes of mass exodus might be alleviated. That had generally been the case, but some situations, in Sarajevo and Somalia, for example, had worsened. Indeed, for many refugees in developing countries, no immediate solution was in sight and new mass movements of refugees were occurring, caused chiefly by conflict, poverty and underdevelopment. The search for durable solutions should focus on those problems and on the development needs of countries of origin and asylum countries alike.

53. The refugee problem in Malawi was growing. The number of Mozambican refugees had risen from 960,000 in 1991 to over 1 million in August 1992. The cost burden on the economy had reached a crisis point. Environmental damage and pressure on primary schools, hospitals, roads and water resources had become tremendous. Refugee camps were overflowing and the host areas could not accept more arrivals without crowding out the local population. Moreover, Malawi, like the rest of southern Africa, was suffering from the worst drought in living memory. Nearly 6.1 million Malawians were suffering food shortages owing to crop failure, as well as outbreaks of disease due to lack of safe drinking water. The shortage of medicaments and of money to meet the cost of transporting relief food created further serious problems.

54. He briefly summarized the status of relief requirements, pledges and shortfalls as at 31 September 1992: for maize, the current shortfall was 242,552 mt (US\$ 98,626,000); for internal transport requirements, it was US\$ 28,300,000; for health and nutrition, US\$ 30,900,000; for water supply and rehabilitation of boreholes, US\$ 8,400,000. There were also serious shortfalls regarding the storage of relief materials and in supplementary food such as pulses and vegetable oil. More assistance was clearly required, therefore, to meet the needs of the refugees and to fund the recurrent and capital costs of redressing their impact on the economy. He sincerely hoped, therefore, that donors would not only continue, but increase their assistance.

55. In that regard, Malawi wholeheartedly supported the High Commissioner's efforts to promote voluntary repatriation. Malawi had consistently pursued a policy of diplomatic contact between the parties to the conflict in Mozambique and had helped to promote a series of historic meetings between them. The signing of the peace accord would not only improve the prospects for voluntary repatriation, but also, by opening Malawi's shortest route to the sea, facilitate haulage and reduce transport costs, thus easing the pressures on the economy.

56. Although voluntary repatriation was a noble goal, experience had shown that proper conditions were essential. As reported to the Executive Committee at its forty-second session, Malawi, as a member of the Tripartite Commission on Voluntary Repatriation, had carried out voluntary exercises and some refugees had registered to return. The Tripartite Commission had identified some safe havens for that purpose; such havens had, however, been devastated by war and lacked the requisite basic infrastructure to support continued voluntary repatriation. Although the Tripartite Commission had agreed that voluntary repatriation, suspended in April 1992, should be resumed in May, no repatriation had been carried out. In fact, due to renewed factional fighting, 52,000 new refugees had entered Malawi during the past three months. Malawi had no additional resources to deal with them and appealed to the donor community to help prevent a serious crisis.

57. His Government actively cooperated with the international community in seeking a durable solution to the refugee problem and, in June 1992, had hosted an international conference on first asylum country and development aid. The conference had recommended, *inter alia*, provision by the donor community of more development and humanitarian assistance; steps to ensure the safety and dignity

of returnees; and adequate donor support for voluntary repatriation. In that connection, he welcomed the High Commissioner's personal commitment in acting as a catalyst for cooperation with the donor community with a view to further funding.

58. His Government remained firmly committed to helping refugees, but Malawi could not go on absorbing the hidden costs and sacrifices of hosting disproportionately large numbers indefinitely. Every opportunity should be seized to enable Mozambican refugees in Malawi to be repatriated. His delegation, while sincerely thanking UNHCR and the donor community for their continued support, stressed the need for more funds to meet the emergency needs of the growing refugee population and to redress the adverse impact on the economy. Infrastructure rehabilitation and the provision of basic amenities were crucial to the feasibility of voluntary repatriation and a durable solution to the problem.

59. Mr. VAERNO (Norway) said that the Executive Committee was currently meeting at a time of unprecedented demands on the Office of the High Commissioner. The hopes and expectations of the post cold war era had been overshadowed by new emergencies characterized by ethnic strife and the breakdown of civic society, causing new flows of refugees and further internal displacements. In many instances, protection and assistance had been seriously impaired due to the high degree of violence. Such new and complex challenges called for an effective response by the United Nations system, to which the world was looking increasingly. Available resources were limited, although some countries, firmly committed to the principle of burden-sharing, had maintained high contributions to UNHCR.

60. A new partnership, the need for which the High Commissioner had underlined, should be a key to the strategy of the United Nations and the world community in meeting new demands more effectively. Humanitarian action alone, however, could not solve the underlying problems, which required political action. UNHCR had provided a valuable input to the United Nations system's overall efforts in response to humanitarian emergencies; the world at large recognized the devotion and the practical approach of the High Commissioner and her staff in meeting the new challenges.

61. The strategy set out by the High Commissioner in 1991 represented an increasingly pertinent framework for international action, with its emphasis on enhanced emergency response, intensified pursuit of durable solutions and preventive measures. Norway supported the three-pronged policy and the efforts to act as a catalyst vis-à-vis other parts of the United Nations system and partners outside.

62. The emergency response and preparedness mechanisms recommended by the Executive Committee at its forty-second session had proved necessary. It was hoped that the difficulties involved in fully utilizing internal emergency preparedness and staffing could be resolved; but the magnitude of emergency operations meant that UNHCR should seek, more than ever, external resources for standby arrangements. Although his delegation did not wish to undermine the work of UNHCR staff, it recommended that the personnel secondment arrangements established through agreements with the Norwegian and Danish Refugee Councils should serve as models, given the clear need to supplement and support permanent staff at the operational level.

63. Norway welcomed the close working relations between the newly established Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNHCR. The institutionalization of consolidated United Nations appeals had become an initial important measure for dealing with complex emergencies such those in the Horn of Africa and Somalia, the drought in southern Africa and the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia, as well as for large-scale repatriation operations such as those in Cambodia and Afghanistan. To achieve the system's full potential, however, roles must be more clearly identified and lead agencies established. The division of roles between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, on the one hand, and UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and other parties, on the other, also had to be defined. Likewise, the potential contribution of non-governmental organizations should be taken into account in operational and standby plans.

64. The search for durable solutions to refugee problems was at the heart of UNHCR's mandate. The world community must seize opportunities for large-scale repatriation; UNHCR could play a leading role in mobilizing international efforts and ensuring safe return through access and monitoring. Norway strongly supported a general allocation for repatriation within the proposed General Programme for 1993. The complexities arising from the lack of infrastructure, the gap between relief and development and the need for protection after long conflicts called for comprehensive approaches. A further impediment was the problem of removing mines, for which task institutional responsibility regrettably remained unclarified.

65. Innovative concepts such as Quick Impact Projects were valuable and UNHCR was urged to develop specific models based on the continuum from relief to development. His delegation looked forward to following up those matters in UNDP and the Economic and Social Council and hoped that the High Commissioner would keep the Executive Committee informed about the implementation of common guidelines on refugee aid and development, approved by ACC earlier in the year.

66. With regard to repatriation of Mozambican refugees, UNHCR had undertaken important work in preparing a "package" programme which urgently required the support of the United Nations and the Governments. His Government, which had taken an active part, together with UNHCR, other United Nations agencies, the Mozambican Government and non-governmental organizations, in preparing a regional plan, viewed with satisfaction the signing of the peace accord and had noted the statement by the observer for Mozambique at the current meeting.

67. Protection remained a fundamental part of UNHCR's mandate. Protection functions were covered by a complex legal framework including the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, supplemented by regional arrangements such as the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees and the OAU Convention. Refugee law must, however, be complemented by humanitarian law and human rights; and international action should be based on coherent national policies and the international principles of burden-sharing and solidarity. Refugee work should be more closely linked with United Nations efforts relating to peace, human rights, development and a better environment, focusing not merely on symptoms, but also on root causes.

68. Refugees currently constituted only part of the movement of persons seeking asylum. Pressure on asylum procedures had complicated the situation for host countries and for persons fleeing their country owing to strife, persecution and other human rights violations.

69. Norway reiterated its concern for the internally displaced and urged UNHCR, when called upon to do so, to continue to assist and protect them. Strong international safeguards, by means of agreed legal provisions, were required; current work in the Commission on Human Rights and the outcome of the World Conference on Human Rights would be of great importance in that regard.

70. His delegation commended UNHCR on the work of the Working Group on International Protection. The Note on international protection (A/AC.96/799) placed a welcome emphasis on State responsibility, prevention - including in-country protection - and temporary protection. The notion of the latter was important with a view to integrating developments in the international political arena with UNHCR's own endeavours. Norway looked forward to taking part in further deliberations on that and related matters raised in the Note, with a view to reinforcing the High Commissioner's strategy within the mandate and competence of the Office.

71. He reiterated Norway's support for the High Commissioner's firm action with regard to the former Yugoslavia and welcomed the way in which she was bringing together the process of follow-up to the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia and the London International Conference on Former Yugoslavia. Norway would continue to give strong support to UNHCR's humanitarian work in general and to its role as a lead agency in the former Yugoslavia in particular; it had noted the High Commissioner's special appeal, made the previous day, for temporary safe haven for former detainees from that region and his Government had decided to take its share of that urgent caseload.

72. Mr. AL-KADHI (Observer for Iraq) said that the current session of the Executive Committee was being held at a time when ethnic strife and armed conflict had taken the world to the edge of an uncertain future, marked, despite the end of the ideological conflict, by persistent instability. Ethnic strife had led to huge exoduses of refugees, as evidenced by the case of the former Yugoslavia, and UNHCR now had to face new duties and burdens. The development of emergency plans to deal with sudden displacements of refugees was a necessity if UNHCR was to play its role properly.

73. His delegation viewed positively the efforts of the High Commissioner and hoped that her constructive proposals would be translated into action, a task which would require strengthened cooperation from all parties concerned. It also stressed the importance of dealing with the root causes of population displacements without consideration for political and propaganda motives and of removing the obstacles to the performance of UNHCR's task.

74. At the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, held in July 1992, the High Commissioner had referred to the great suffering that economic sanctions could cause if they applied to food and drugs. That consideration was particularly relevant to Iraq. The Western countries had refused to exclude food and drugs from the

economic embargo imposed on Iraq and to release funds for the purchase of food and drugs and had frozen assets which Iraq had placed in Western banks to provide for food and drug purchases. Through its Executive Committee, UNHCR should explicitly call for an end to the embargo in order to alleviate the suffering in Iraq to which reference had been made in many independent reports.

75. There was no longer any legal justification for the embargo, whose obvious and avowed purpose was to change the political regime in Iraq. He called on the Executive Committee to take a clear stance on the embargo, which was the direct cause of the suffering of the Iraqi people. Iraq did not need any gifts and, in other circumstances, could itself provide humanitarian assistance for other States, as it had done in the past. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq had stated in the General Assembly that Iraq was prepared to export \$4 billion worth of petrol and to earmark 5 per cent of the earnings to providing relief in Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Palestine.

76. When the United Nations had initiated humanitarian relief operations, with limited resources, in April 1991 its aim had been to alleviate the sufferings caused by the Gulf war. The intent of the hostile Powers was to exploit the situation in order to interfere in Iraq's domestic affairs and that aim took precedence over humanitarian objectives.

77. His delegation had listened with interest to the comments made by the United Kingdom delegation on behalf of the European Economic Community concerning the situation in northern Iraq. The logic followed by the United Kingdom delegation was in keeping with the Western countries' negative policy towards Iraq. The international community was aware that northern Iraq was outside Iraqi control and under the authority of the Western Powers, which should bear responsibility for the situation there. Attention had also been drawn to the precarious situation in southern Iraq, but, in fact, the situation in all of Iraq was difficult because of the embargo. Although the Government of Iraq was sparing no effort to ease the suffering, the lifting of the economic embargo would solve the Iraqi people's problems and Iraq would no longer need aid. The rules of international humanitarian law had been totally disregarded in Iraq by a few powers which had forced the international community as a whole to assume responsibility for solving the problems they alone had created.

78. UNHCR had decided to reduce its activity in Iraq and gradually to transfer responsibility to other agencies. However, it still had a role to play in facilitating the return of refugees from neighbouring States. In the past, Iraq had cooperated with all humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations and, in particular, with UNHCR and ICRC. It was prepared to continue cooperating with UNHCR to achieve its humanitarian objectives free from interference in its internal affairs and sovereignty.

79. Mr. de SA BARBUDA (Brazil) said that the extensive documentation provided to the Executive Committee and, in particular, the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/799) would serve as a sound basis for discussion at the current session. Brazil shared the concerns expressed by the High Commissioner about the trends emerging in the post-cold-war period, when the signs of the establishment of a new atmosphere of peace, security and cooperation were being accompanied by destabilizing factors in different parts of the world.

80. Political instability, violence, ethnic separatism and internal armed conflicts added a high degree of complexity to the refugee situation and, together with economic recession, which widened the gap between developing and developed nations, contributed to increasing not only refugee flows, but also overpopulation, extreme poverty and human rights violations, all of which represented new challenges to be tackled by UNHCR.

81. The Overview of UNHCR Activities for 1991-1992 (A/AC.96/798) gave clear examples of the worldwide plight of refugees. The magnitude and scope of the refugee problems in Somalia and in the former Yugoslavia justified the deepest concern and renewed efforts, although they were unfortunately not the sole humanitarian emergencies requiring an immediate response by the international community and UNHCR. Part II of the Overview covered a wide range of situations where the High Commissioner had a key role to play in protecting refugees and searching for durable solutions.

82. Brazil took note with appreciation of the widely recognized understanding that UNHCR's competence extended to persons who were forced to leave their countries and who might not be covered by the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol. In its view, UNHCR's expertise should extend to internally displaced persons, whenever deemed appropriate by the international community, and the relevant provisions of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees could offer useful guidance in that regard. The right to asylum was a fundamental principle of refugee protection and UNHCR should continue to promote expeditious refugee status determination on an individual basis, although, in mass-influx situations where the provisions of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol seemed unworkable, the determination could be made on a group basis. Large-scale displacements and protracted refugee situations could compound socio-economic difficulties in countries of asylum, but every refugee or asylum-seeker should be guaranteed non-discrimination and the right to basic standards of humane treatment.

83. Among the various approaches pursued by UNHCR for groups which were not covered by the Convention and the Protocol, the concept of temporary protection had been suggested as a possible alternative to the right of asylum in mass-influx situations. Since asylum itself was considered a temporary solution, pending resolution of the circumstances that had given rise to refugee status, it would be necessary further to clarify the objectives and conceptual elements of temporary protection, which was sometimes being linked to the concept of safe return. Before implementing any form of compulsory return, objective criteria would have to be defined to determine whether security concerns had been fully met and further caution would be necessary in dealing with cessation clauses to ensure that refugees were not forced to return to unsafe countries or prevented from staying in the country of asylum if they had social and economic links there.

84. Clearly, the emerging safe-country concept would be largely detrimental to the refugees concerned and it was preferable to encourage voluntary repatriation as the best durable solution. In Central America, as a result of the successful repatriation programme implemented within the framework of CIREFCA, returnees currently outnumbered refugees.

85. Another issue dealt with in the Note on International Protection was prevention, which could include early warning, preventive diplomacy, human rights promotion and social and economic development. His delegation supported the idea of developing such positive approaches and reminded the Executive Committee that most refugee displacements originated in developing countries whose economies were hard hit by recession. In addition, most migratory movements were towards other developing countries which were barely able to receive them without international solidarity and burden-sharing. If the interrelationship between development, migration, refugee flows and environment were taken as a whole, development seemed to be the best preventive measure against mass-influx situations.

86. Preventive diplomacy could also play an important role in UNHCR's future strategies to promote humanitarian relief and to support the Secretary-General's peacemaking and peace-keeping activities. As refugee flows were frequently caused by widespread human rights violations, he advocated cooperation between UNHCR and the Centre for Human Rights to allow the former to improve its early warning capacity by access to relevant data from the United Nations human rights machinery. He endorsed the High Commissioner's warning about the need to approach with caution the question of safety zones within countries of origin and emphasized that the decision to create such safety zones should be taken by the international community in the most democratic way, for example, by the General Assembly itself. Lastly, he hoped that the Executive Committee would achieve a consensus on those important issues in order to improve and better coordinate UNHCR's response to the needs of the world's 17 million refugees, 80 per cent of whom were women and children whose need for further protection had been recognized in the wise decision to appoint Senior Coordinators for them.

87. Mr. DEMEKSA (Ethiopia) said that, during the year since the forty-second session of the Executive Committee, highly significant political developments in Ethiopia had led to the consolidation of the foundations for peace, democracy and progress. A healthy, multi-party political atmosphere had emerged, local elections had just been completed, the groundwork was under way for multi-party democracy to take deeper and firmer roots and the country enjoyed greater stability than ever before. The Transitional Government had adopted a new policy of liberalization aimed at increasing privatization, developing a market economy and offering attractive incentives to domestic and external investors.

88. However, those encouraging developments had been considerably overshadowed by the onset and spread of recurrent drought and famine which had left no less than 8 million persons almost totally dependent on relief assistance. The numbers were increased by the thousands of persons displaced by localized conflict and by the considerable caseload of families of demobilized soldiers. In addition, Ethiopia was hosting over half a million Somali refugees and some 17,000 Sudanese, along with smaller caseloads of refugees from other neighbouring and distant African countries. The situation had been further complicated by the return of some 450,000 persons into the Borena and Ogaden regions as a result of the intensification of the civil war in Somalia in early 1991.

89. The situation had required extensive and tireless efforts by the Government, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. The Government's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission had done valuable work in mobilizing and administering relief assistance to the drought-affected and locally displaced populations. Refugees had been receiving care and maintenance assistance under the auspices of UNHCR and it had been possible to distribute some food to the returnees from Somalia and provide them with cash travel grants for transportation to their respective areas of reintegration.

90. Understandably, both emergency and reintegration assistance packages had been inadequate in terms of quality and quantity as a result, in particular, of the lack of resources. All in all, it had not been possible to achieve even a reasonable degree of equity between assistance requirements and the assistance provided.

91. A consensus, had developed between the Government, the relevant United Nations agencies and participating non-governmental organizations to implement a cross-mandate operation in which they would pool their resources to provide community-based assistance to all needy populations without discrimination. Several months had elapsed since the operation had been launched on an ad hoc basis in the Borena and Ogaden regions, where the situation had been most critical. Unfortunately, not all the agencies involved in the implementation of the operation had so far come up with satisfactory tangible contributions in any way comparable to that of UNHCR, whose practical commitment was commendable. The operation was still in the experimental stage and obviously called for a very high degree of coordination and the maintenance of tight linkage between relief and rehabilitation if it was to have lasting significance.

92. Careful consideration of the circumstances surrounding the situation of Somali refugees revealed that a far greater number of them had entered Ethiopia than was officially acknowledged. Even though the Somali refugees in Ethiopia remained unaccounted for officially, they were currently living throughout the country. An operation had been instituted recently, in collaboration with the UNHCR Regional Liaison Office, to register and screen those refugees and to persuade them to go to camps where they could receive assistance and residence or transit permits when appropriate. He stressed his country's determination that registration would be done in a way that safeguarded the refugees' dignity and would ultimately be for their maximum benefit.

93. The situation of the refugees and returnees as a whole was indeed sordid because the lack of basic amenities such as shelter, clothing and clean drinking water made it difficult to maintain even a minimally acceptable level of sustenance for them. As was to be expected, the impact of the refugee burden was deeply felt in Ethiopia; despite assistance from the international donor community, the burden had become too heavy and required undivided attention and concrete support from donor Governments and international development agencies. It was his Government's confirmed opinion that assistance to refugees and returnees should maintain a close linkage between relief and recovery if it was to be meaningful. The 450,000 Ethiopian refugees who had returned from Somalia

had arrived with few or no possessions and in conditions of extreme poverty in peripheral regions which lacked even the most basic infrastructure facilities and resources. Their situation had rapidly evolved into an emergency that had not yet been fully contained. The mobilization and provision of meaningful rehabilitation assistance to returnees in Ethiopia was a matter of the utmost practical urgency. In addition, Ethiopia expected to receive a further 160,000 Ethiopian refugees from the Sudan in the very near future. A reconnaissance visit had already been made by a multi-agency mission to assess the situation in the expected areas of reintegration and preliminary talks had been initiated with UNHCR in Khartoum and with the Sudanese authorities to facilitate the repatriation scheme, which was due to start in January 1993.

94. The task of ensuring the effective reintegration and rehabilitation of returnees was a formidable and complex one requiring significant resources which were beyond the means of any single international or national agency. The problem as a whole called for a concerted multi-party and multi-disciplinary approach involving specialized agencies in the United Nations family, sectoral ministries of the Government, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, with a redefinition of roles that stressed systematic transition from relief - currently required by no less than 10 million persons in Ethiopia - to development.

95. He thanked UNHCR, donor Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations for the assistance they had provided and expressed his delegation's hope and firm conviction that UNHCR and the international donor community at large would revitalize their assistance to promote universally recognized humanitarian objectives.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.